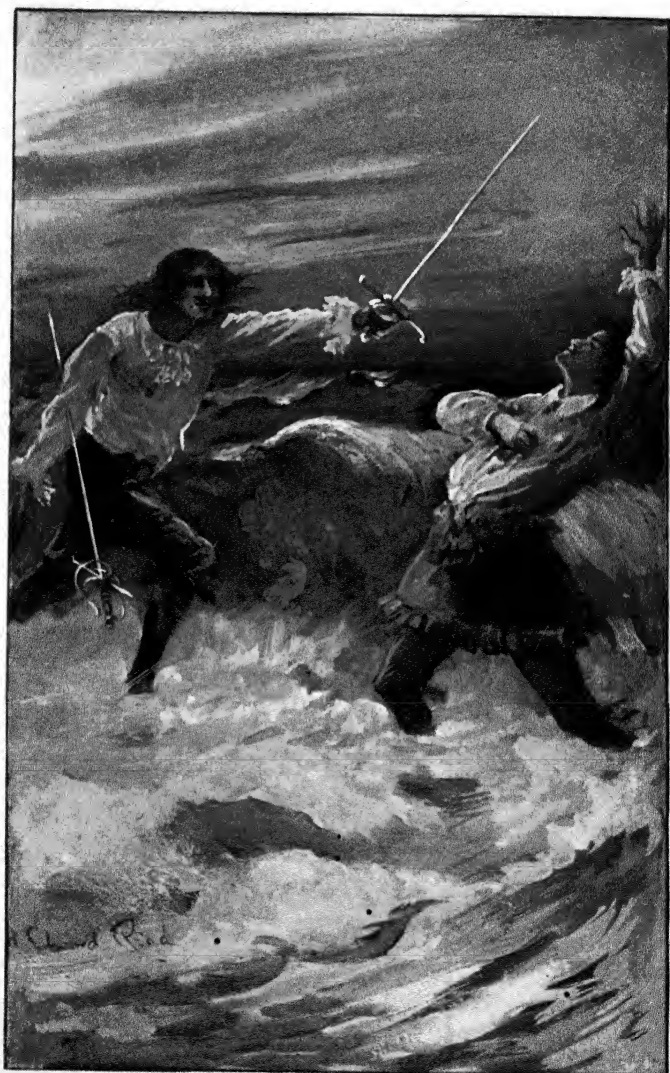


THE VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE.

VOL. II.

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De Wardes tottered, his knees gave way under him.

THE WAVERLEY DUMAS

THE VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE

CONTAINING
TEN YEARS LATER
AND
THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK

BY
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOL II

LONDON

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THE VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE.

CHAPTER I.

THE GALLERY OF SAINT-MANDÉ.

FIFTY persons were waiting for the superintendent. He did not even take the time to place himself in the hands of his *valet de chambre* for a minute, but from the *perron* went straight into the *premier salon*. There his friends were assembled in full chat. The intendant was about to order supper to be served, but, above all, the Abbé Fouquet watched for the return of his brother, and was endeavoring to do the honors of the house in his absence. Upon the arrival of the superintendent, a murmur of joy and affection was heard; Fouquet, full of affability, good humor, and munificence, was beloved by his poets, his artists, and his men of business. His brow, upon which his little court read, as upon that of a god, all the movements of his soul, and thence drew rules of conduct,—his brow, upon which affairs of state never impressed a wrinkle, was this evening paler than usual, and more than one friendly eye remarked that pallor. Fouquet placed himself at the head of the table, and presided gayly during supper. He recounted Vatel's expedition to La Fontaine, he related the history of Menneville and the skinny fowl to Pellisson, in such a manner, that all the

table heard it. A tempest of laughter and jokes ensued, which was only checked by a serious and even sad gesture from Pellisson. The Abbé Fouquet, not being able to comprehend why his brother should have led the conversation in that direction, listened with all his ears, and sought in the countenance of Gourville, or in that of his brother, an explanation which nothing afforded him. Pellisson took up the matter:—"Did they mention M. Colbert, then?" said he.

"Why not?" replied Fouquet; "if true, as it is said to be, that the king has made him his intendant?" Scarcely had Fouquet uttered these words, with a marked intention, than an explosion broke forth among the guests.

"The miser!" said one.

"The mean, pitiful fellow!" said another.

"The hypocrite!" said a third.

Pellisson exchanged a meaning look with Fouquet. "Messieurs," said he, "in truth we are abusing a man whom no one knows: it is neither charitable nor reasonable; and here is monsieur le surintendant, who, I am sure, agrees with me."

"Entirely," replied Fouquet. "Let the fat fowls of M. Colbert alone; our business to-day is with the *faisans truffés* of M. Vatel." This speech stopped the dark cloud which was beginning to throw its shade over the guests. Gourville succeeded so well in animating the poets with the *vin de Joigny*; the abbé, intelligent as a man who stands in need of his host's money, so enlivened the financiers and the men of the sword, that, amidst the vapors of this joy and the noise of conversation, inquietudes disappeared completely. The will of Cardinal Mazarin was the text of the conversation at the second course and dessert; then Fouquet ordered bowls of sweetmeats and fountains of liquors to be carried into the

salon adjoining the gallery. He led the way thither, conducting by the hand a lady, the queen, by his preference, of the evening. The musicians then supped, and the promenades in the gallery and the gardens commenced, beneath a spring sky, mild and flower-scented. Pellisson then approached the superintendent, and said: "Something troubles monseigneur?"

"Greatly," replied the minister; "ask Gourville to tell you what it is." Pellisson, on turning round, found La Fontaine treading upon his heels. He was obliged to listen to a Latin verse, which the poet had composed upon Vatel. La Fontaine had, for an hour, been scanning this verse in all corners, seeking some one to pour it out upon advantageously. He thought he had caught Pellisson, but the latter escaped him; he turned towards Sorel, who had, himself, just composed a *quatrain* in honor of the supper, and the *Amphytrion*. La Fontaine in vain endeavored to gain attention to his verses; Sorel wanted to obtain a hearing for his *quatrain*. He was obliged to retreat before M. le Comte de Chanost, whose arm Fouquet had just taken. L'Abbé Fouquet perceived that the poet, absent-minded as usual, was about to follow the two talkers; and he interposed. La Fontaine seized upon him, and recited his verses. The abbé, who was quite innocent of Latin, nodded his head, in cadence, at every roll which La Fontaine impressed upon his body, according to the undulations of the dactyls and spondees. While this was going on, behind the confiture-basins, Fouquet related the event of the day to his son-in-law, M. de Chanost. "We will send the idle and useless to look at the fire-works," said Pellisson to Gourville, "whilst we converse here."

"So be it," said Gourville, addressing four words to Vatel. The latter then led towards the gardens the major part of the beaux, the ladies and the chatterers, whilst

the men walked in the gallery, lighted by three hundred wax-lights, in the sight of all; the admirers of fire-works all ran away towards the garden. Gourville approached Fouquet, and said: "Monsieur, we are here."

"All!" said Fouquet.

"Yes,—count." The superintendent counted; there were eight persons. Pellisson and Gourville walked arm in arm, as if conversing upon vague and frivolous subjects. Sorel and two officers imitated them, in an opposite direction. The Abbé Fouquet walked alone. Fouquet, with M. de Chanost, walked as if entirely absorbed in the conversation of his son-in-law. "Messieurs," said he, "let no one of you raise his head as he walks, or appear to pay attention to me; continue walking, we are alone, listen to me."

A perfect silence ensued, disturbed only by the distant cries of the joyous guests, from the groves whence they beheld the fire-works. It was a whimsical spectacle this, of these men walking in groups, as if each one was occupied about something, whilst lending attention really to only one amongst them, who, himself, seemed to be speaking only to his companion. "Messieurs," said Fouquet, "you have, without doubt, remarked the absence of two of my friends this evening, who were with us on Wednesday. For God's sake, abbé, do not stop,—it is not necessary to enable you to listen; walk on, carrying your head in a natural way, and as you have an excellent sight, place yourself at the window, and if any one returns towards the gallery, give us notice by coughing."

The abbé obeyed.

"I have not observed their absence," said Pellisson, who, at this moment, was turning his back to Fouquet, and walking the other way.

"I do not see M. Lyodot," said Sorel, "who pays me my pension."

"And I," said the abbé, at the window, "do not see M. d'Eymeris, who owes me eleven hundred livres from our last game at Brelan."

"Sorel," continued Fouquet, walking bent, and gloomily, "you will never receive your pension any more from M. Lyodot; and you, abbé, will never be paid your eleven hundred livres by M. d'Eymeris; for both are doomed to die."

"To die!" exclaimed the whole assembly, arrested, in spite of themselves, in the comedy they were playing, by that terrible word.

"Recover yourselves, messieurs," said Fouquet, "for perhaps, we are watched—I said: to die!"

"To die!" repeated Pellisson; "what, the men I saw six days ago, full of health, gayety, and the spirit of the future! What then is man, good God! that disease should thus bring him down all at once!"

"It is not a disease," said Fouquet.

"Then there is a remedy," said Sorel.

"No remedy. Messieurs de Lyodot and D'Eymeris are on the eve of their last day."

"Of what are these gentlemen dying then?" asked an officer.

"Ask of him who kills them," replied Fouquet.

"Who kills them? Are they being killed, then?" cried the terrified chorus.

"They do better still; they are hanging them," murmured Fouquet, in a sinister voice, which sounded like a funeral knell in that rich gallery, splendid with pictures, flowers, velvet, and gold. Involuntarily every one stopped; the abbé quitted his window; the first fuses of the fire-works began to mount above the trees. A prolonged cry from the gardens attracted the superintendent to enjoy the spectacle. He drew near to a window, and his friends placed themselves behind him, attentive to his least wish.

"Messieurs," said he, "M. Colbert has caused to be arrested, tried and will execute my two friends; what does it become me to do?"

"*Mordieu!*" exclaimed the abbé, the first one to speak, "run M. Colbert through the body."

"Monseigneur," said Pellisson, "you must speak to his majesty."

"The king, my dear Pellisson, himself signed the order for the execution."

"Well!" said the Comte de Chanost, "the execution must not take place, then; that is all."

"Impossible," said Gourville, "unless we could corrupt the jailers."

"Or the governor," said Fouquet.

"This night the prisoners might be allowed to escape."

"Which of you will take charge of the transaction?"

"I," said the abbé, "will carry the money."

"And I," said Pellisson, "will be the bearer of the words."

"Words and money," said Fouquet, "five hundred thousand livres to the governor of the *conciergerie*, that is sufficient; nevertheless, it shall be a million, if necessary."

"A million!" cried the abbé; "why, for less than half, I would have half Paris sacked."

"There must be no disorder," said Pellisson. "The governor being gained, the two prisoners escape; once clear of the fangs of the law, they will call together the enemies of Colbert, and prove to the king that his young justice, like all other monstrosities, is not infallible."

"Go to Paris, then, Pellisson," said Fouquet, "and bring hither the two victims; to-morrow we shall see."

Gourville gave Pellisson the five hundred thousand livres. "Take care the wind does not carry you away,"

said the abbé; "what a responsibility. *Peste!* Let me help you a little."

"Silence!" said Fouquet, "somebody is coming. Ah! the fire-works are producing a magical effect." At this moment a shower of sparks fell rustling among the branches of the neighboring trees. Pellisson and Gourville went out together by the door of the gallery; Fouquet descended to the garden with the five last plotters.

CHAPTER II.

EPICUREANS.

As Fouquet was giving, or appearing to give, all his attention to the brilliant illuminations, the languishing music of the violins and hautboys, the sparkling sheaves of the artificial fires, which, inflaming the heavens with glowing reflections, marked behind the trees the dark profile of the donjon of Vincennes; as, we say, the superintendent was smiling on the ladies and the poets, the *fête* was every whit as gay as usual; and Vatel, whose restless, even jealous look, earnestly consulted the aspect of Fouquet, did not appear dissatisfied with the welcome given to the ordering of the evening's entertainment. The fire-works over, the company dispersed about the gardens and beneath the marble porticos with the delightful liberty which reveals in the master of the house so much forgetfulness of greatness, so much courteous hospitality, so much magnificent carelessness. The poets wandered about, arm in arm, through the groves; some reclined upon beds of moss, to the great damage of velvet clothes and curled heads, into which little dried leaves and blades of grass insinuated themselves. The ladies, in

small numbers, listened to the songs of the singers and the verses of the poets; others listened to the prose, spoken with much art, by men who were neither actors nor poets, but to whom youth and solitude gave an unaccustomed eloquence, which appeared to them better than everything else in the world. "Why," said La Fontaine, "does not our master Epicurus descend into the garden? Epicurus never abandoned his pupils; the master is wrong."

"Monsieur," said Conrart, you yourself are in the wrong persisting in decorating yourself with the name of an Epicurean; indeed, nothing here reminds me of the doctrine of the philosopher of Gargetta."

"Bah!" said La Fontaine, "is it not written that Epicurus purchased a large garden and lived in it tranquilly with his friends?"

"That is true."

"Well, has not M. Fouquet purchased a large garden at Saint-Mandé, and do we not live here very tranquilly with him and his friends?"

"Yes, without doubt; unfortunately it is neither the garden nor the friends which constitute the resemblance. Now, what likeness is there between the doctrine of Epicurus and that of M. Fouquet?"

"This—pleasure gives happiness."

"Next?"

"Well, I do not think we ought to consider ourselves unfortunate, for my part, at least. A good repast—*vin de Foigny*, which they have the delicacy to go and fetch for me from my favorite *cabaret*—not one impertinence heard during a supper an hour long, in spite of the presence of ten millionaires and twenty poets."

"I stop you there. You mentioned *vin de Foigny*, and a good repast; do you persist in that?"

"I persist,—*anteco*, as they say at Port Royal."

"Then please to recollect that the great Epicurus lived, and made his pupils live, upon bread, vegetables, and water."

"That is not certain," said La Fontaine; "and you appear to me to be confounding Epicurus with Pythagoras, my dear Conrart."

"Remember, likewise, that the ancient philosopher was rather a bad friend of the gods and the magistrates."

"Oh! that is what I will not admit," replied La Fontaine. Epicurus was like M. Fouquet."

"Do not compare him to monsieur le surintendant," said Conrart, in an agitated voice, "or you would accredit the reports which are circulated concerning him and us."

"What reports?"

"That we are bad Frenchmen, lukewarm with regard to the king, deaf to the law."

"I return, then, to my text," said La Fontaine. "Listen, Conrart, this is the morality of Epicurus, whom, besides, I consider, if I must tell you so, as a myth. Antiquity is mostly mythical. Jupiter, if we give a little attention to it, is life. Alcides is strength. The words are there to bear me out; Zeus, that is *zen*, to live. Alcides, that is, *alcé*, vigor. Well, Epicurus, that is mild watchfulness, that is protection; now who watches better over the state, or who protects individuals better than M. Fouquet does?"

"You talk etymology and not morality; I say that we modern Epicureans are indifferent citizens."

"Oh!" cried La Fontaine, "if we become bad citizens, it is not through following the maxims of our master. Listen to one of his principal aphorisms."

"I—will."

"Pray for good leaders."

"Well?"

"Well! what does M. Fouquet say to us every day?"

‘When shall we be governed?’ Does he say so? Come, Conrart, be frank.”

“He says so, that is true.”

“Well, that is a doctrine of Epicurus.”

“Yes; but that is a little seditious, observe.”

“What! seditious to wish to be governed by good heads or leaders?”

“Certainly, when those who govern are bad.”

“Patience, I have a reply for all.”

“Even for what I have just said to you?”

“Listen! would you submit to those who govern ill? Oh! it is written: *Cacôs politeuoussi*. You grant me the text?”

“*Pardieu!* I think so. Do you know you speak Greek as well as *Æsop* did, my dear La Fontaine.”

“Is there any wickedness in that, my dear Conrart?”

“God forbid I should say so.”

“Then let us return to M. Fouquet. What did he repeat to us all the day? Was it not this? ‘What a *cuisse* is that Mazarin! what an ass! what a leech! We must, however, submit to the fellow.’ Now, Conrart, did he say so, or did he not?”

“I confess that he said it, and even perhaps too often.”

“Like Epicurus, my friend, still like Epicurus; I repeat, we are Epicureans, and that is very amusing.”

“Yes; but I am afraid there will rise up, by the side of us, a sect like that of Epictetus; you know him well; the philosopher of Hieropolis, he who called bread luxury, vegetables prodigality, and clear water drunkenness; he who, being beaten by his master, said to him, grumbling a little it is true, but without being angry. ‘I will lay a wager you have broken my leg!’—and who won his wager.”

“He was a goose, that fellow Epictetus.”

"Granted, but he might easily become the fashion by only changing his name into that of Colbert."

"Bah!" replied La Fontaine, "that is impossible. Never will you find Colbert in Epictetus."

"You are right, I shall find—*Coluber* there, at the most."

"Ah! you are beaten, Conrart; you are reduced to a play upon words. M. Arnaud pretends that I have no logic; I have more than M. Nicolle."

"Yes," replied Conrart, "you have logic, but you are a Jansenist."

This peroration was hailed with a boisterous shout of laughter; by degrees the promenaders had been attracted by the exclamations of the two disputants around the arbor under which they were arguing. The discussion had been religiously listened to, and Fouquet himself, scarcely able to suppress his laughter, had given an example of moderation. But with the *dénouement* of the scene he threw off all restraint, and laughed aloud. Everybody laughed as he did, and the two philosophers were saluted with unanimous felicitations. La Fontaine, however, was declared conqueror, on account of his profound erudition and his irrefragable logic. Conrart obtained the compensation due to an unsuccessful combatant; he was praised for the loyalty of his intentions, and the purity of his conscience.

At the moment when this jollity was manifesting itself by the most lively demonstrations, when the ladies were reproaching the two adversaries with not having admitted women into the system of Epicurean happiness, Gourville was seen hastening from the other end of the garden, approaching Fouquet, and detaching him, by his presence alone, from the group. The superintendent preserved on his face the smile and character of carelessness; but scarcely was he out of sight than he threw off the mask.

"Well!" said he, eagerly, "where is Pellisson! What is he doing?"

"Pellisson has returned from Paris."

"Has he brought back the prisoners?"

"He has not even seen *conciergerie* of the prison."

"What! did he not tell him he came from me?"

"He told him so, but the *conciergerie* sent him this reply: 'If any one came to me from M. Fouquet, he would have a letter from M. Fouquet.'"

"Oh!" cried the latter, "if a letter is all he wants——"

"It is useless, monsieur!" said Pellisson, showing himself at the corner of the little wood, "useless! Go yourself, and speak in your own name."

"You are right. I will go in, as if to work; let the horses remain harnessed, Pellisson. Entertain my friends, Gourville."

"One last word of advice, monseigneur," replied the latter.

"Speak, Gourville."

"Do not go to the *conciergerie* save at the last minute; it is brave, but it is not wise. Excuse me, Monsieur Pellisson, if I am not of the same opinion as you; but take my advice, monseigneur, send again a message to this *conciergerie*,—he is a worthy man, but do not carry it yourself."

"I will think of it," said Fouquet; "besides we have all the night before us." ε

"Do not reckon too much on time; were the hours we have twice as many as they are, they would not be too much," replied Pellisson; "it is never a fault to arrive too soon."

"Adieu!" said the superintendent; "come with me, Pellisson. Gourville, I commend my guests to your care." And he set off. The Epicureans did not perceive that the head of the school had left them; the violins continued playing all night long.

CHAPTER III.

A QUARTER OF AN HOUR'S DELAY.

Fouquet, on leaving his house for the second time that day, felt himself less heavy and less disturbed than might have been expected. He turned towards Pellisson, who was meditating in the corner of the carriage some good arguments against the violent proceedings of Colbert.

"My dear Pellisson," said Fouquet, "it is a great pity you are not a woman."

"I think, on the contrary, it is very fortunate," replied Pellisson, "for, monseigneur, I am excessively ugly."

"Pellisson! Pellisson!" said the superintendent, laughing: "You repeat too often, you are 'ugly,' not to leave people to believe that it gives you much pain."

"In fact it does, monseigneur, much pain; there is no man more unfortunate than I: I was handsome, the small-pox rendered me hideous; I am deprived of a great means of attraction; now, I am your principal clerk, or something of that sort; I take great interest in your affairs, and if, at this moment, I were a pretty woman, I could render you an important service."

"What?"

"I would go and find the *concierge* of the Palais. I would seduce him, for he is a gallant man, extravagantly partial to women; then I would get away our two prisoners."

"I hope to be able to do so myself, although I am not a pretty woman," replied Fouquet.

"Granted, monseigneur; but you are compromising yourself very much."

"Oh!" cried Fouquet, suddenly, with one of those secret transports which the generous blood of youth, or the remembrance of some sweet emotion, infuses into the heart. "Oh! I know a woman who will enact the personage we stand in need of, with the lieutenant-governor of the *conciergerie*."

"And, on my part, I know fifty, monseigneur; fifty trumpets, which will inform the universe of your generosity, of your devotion to your friends, and, consequently, will ruin you sooner or later in ruining themselves."

"I do not speak of such women, Pellisson; I speak of a noble and beautiful creature who joins to the intelligence and wit of her sex the valor and coolness of ours; I speak of a woman, handsome enough to make the walls of a prison bow down to salute her, discreet enough to let no one suspect by whom she has been sent."

"A treasure!" said Pellisson; "you would make a famous present to monsieur the governor of the *Conciergerie*! *Peste!* monseigneur, he might have his head cut off; but he would, before dying, have had such happiness as no man had enjoyed before him."

"And I add," said Fouquet, "that the *concierge* of the Palais would not have his head cut off, for he would receive of me my horses, to effect his escape, and five hundred thousand livres wherewith to live comfortably in England: I add, that this lady, my friend, would give him nothing but the horses and the money. Let us go and seek her, Pellisson."

The superintendent reached forth his hand towards the gold and silken cord placed in the interior of his carriage, but Pellisson stopped him. "Monseigneur," said he, "you are going to lose as much time in seeking this lady as Columbus took to discover the new world. Now, we have

but two hours in which we can possibly succeed; the *concierge* once gone to bed, how shall we get at him without making a disturbance? When daylight dawns, how can we conceal our proceedings? Go, go yourself, monseigneur, and do not seek either woman or angel to-night."

"But, my dear Pellisson, here we are before her door."

"What! before the angel's door?"

"Why, yes!"

"This is the hotel of Madame de Bellière!"

"Hush!"

"Ah! Good Lord!" exclaimed Pellisson.

"What have you to say against her?"

"Nothing, alas! and it is that which causes my despair. Nothing, absolutely nothing. Why can I not, on the contrary, say ill enough of her to prevent your going to her?"

But Fouquet had already given orders to stop, and the carriage was motionless. "Prevent me!" cried Fouquet; "why, no power on earth should prevent my going to pay my compliments to Madame de Plessis-Bellière; besides, who knows that we shall not stand in need of her!"

"No, monseigneur, no!"

"But I do not wish you to wait for me, Pellisson," replied Fouquet, sincerely courteous.

"The more reason I should, monseigneur; knowing that you are keeping me waiting, you will, perhaps, stay a shorter time. Take care! You see there is a carriage in the court yard: she has some one with her." Fouquet leant towards the steps of the carriage. "One word more," cried Pellisson; "do not go to this lady till you have been to the *concierge*, for Heaven's sake!"

"Eh! five minutes, Pellisson," replied Fouquet, alighting at the steps of the hotel, leaving Pellisson in the carriage, in a very ill-humor. Fouquet ran upstairs, told

his name to the footman, which excited an eagerness and a respect that showed the habit the mistress of the house had of honoring that name in her family. "Monsieur le surintendant," cried the marquise, advancing, very pale, to meet him; "what an honor! what an unexpected pleasure!" said she. Then, in a low voice, "Take care!" added the marquise, "Marguerite Vanel is here!"

"Madame," replied Fouquet, rather agitated, "I came on business. One single word, and quickly, if you please!" And he entered the *salon*. Madame Vanel had risen, paler, more livid, than Envy herself. Fouquet in vain addressed her, with the most agreeable, most pacific salutation; she only replied by a terrible glance darted at the marquise and Fouquet. This keen glance of a jealous woman is a stiletto which pierces every cuirass; Marguerite Vanel plunged it straight into the hearts of the two confidants. She made a courtesy to *her friend*, a more profound one to Fouquet, and took leave, under pretense of having a number of visits to make, without the marquise trying to prevent her, or Fouquet, a prey to anxiety, thinking further about her. She was scarcely out of the room, and Fouquet left alone with the marquise, before he threw himself on his knees, without saying a word. "I expected you," said the marquise, with a tender sigh.

"Oh! no," cried he, "or you would have sent away that woman."

"She has been here little more than half an hour, and I had no expectation she would come this evening."

"You love me just a little, then, marquise?"

"That is not the question, now; it is of your danger; how are your affairs going on?"

"I am going this evening to get my friends out of the prisons of the Palais."

"How will you do that?"

"By buying and bribing the governor."

"He is a friend of mine ; can I assist you, without injuring you?"

"Oh ! marquise, it would be a signal service ; but how can you be employed without your being compromised ? Now, never shall my life, my power, or even my liberty, be purchased at the expense of a single tear from your eyes, or of one frown of pain upon your brow."

"Monseigneur, no more such words, they bewilder me ; I have been culpable in trying to serve you, without calculating the extent of what I was doing. I love you in reality, as a tender friend, and as a friend, I am grateful for your delicate attentions—but, alas!—alas! you will never find a mistress in me."

"Marquise!" cried Fouquet, in a tone of despair ; "why not?"

"Because you are too much beloved," said the young woman, in a low voice ; "because you are too much beloved by too many people—because the splendor of glory and fortune wound my eyes, whilst the darkness of sorrow attracts them ; because, in short, I, who have repulsed you in your proud magnificence ; I who scarcely looked at you in your splendor, I came, like a mad woman, to throw myself, as it were, into your arms, when I saw a misfortune hovering over your head. You understand me, now, monseigneur ? Become happy again, that I may remain chaste in heart and in thought : your misfortune entails my ruin."

"Oh ! madame," said Fouquet, with an emotion he had never before felt ; "were I to fall to the lowest degree of human misery, and hear from your mouth that word which you now refuse me, that day, madame, you will be mistaken in your noble egotism ; that day you will fancy you are consoling the most unfortunate of men, and you will have said : *I love you to the most illustrious, the*

most delighted, the most triumphant of the happy beings of this world."

He was still at her feet, kissing her hand, when Pellisson entered precipitately, crying, in very ill-humor, "Monseigneur! madame! for Heaven's sake! excuse me. Monseigneur, you have been here half an hour. Oh! do not both look at me so reproachfully. Madame, pray who is that lady who left your house soon after monseigneur came in?"

"Madame Vanel," said Fouquet.

"Ha!" cried Pellisson, "I was sure of that."

"Well! what then?"

"Why, she got into her carriage, looking deadly pale."

"What consequence is that to me?"

"Yes, but what she said to her coachman is of consequence to you."

"Kind Heaven!" cried the marquise, "what was that?"

"To M. Colbert's!" said Pellisson, in a hoarse voice.

"*Bon Dieu!*—begone, begone, monseigneur!" replied the marquise, pushing Fouquet out of the *salon*, whilst Pellisson dragged him by the hand.

"Am I, then, indeed," said the superintendent, "become a child, to be frightened by a shadow?"

"You are a giant," said the marquise, "whom a viper is trying to bite in the heel."

Pellisson continued to drag Fouquet to the carriage. "To the Palais at full speed!" cried Pellisson to the coachman. The horses set off like lightning; no obstacle relaxed their pace for an instant. Only, at the arcade Saint-Jean, as they were coming out upon the Place de Grève, a long file of horsemen, barring the narrow passage, stopped the carriage of the superintendent. There was no means of forcing this barrier; it was necessary to wait till the mounted archers of the watch, for it was they who stopped the way, had passed with the heavy carriage they were

escorting, and which ascended rapidly towards the Place Baudoyer. Fouquet and Pellisson took no further account of this circumstance beyond deploring the minute's delay they had thus to submit to. They entered the habitation of the *conciergerie du palais* five minutes after. That officer was still walking about in the front court. At the name of Fouquet, whispered in his ear by Pellisson, the governor eagerly approached the carriage, and, hat in his hand, was profuse in his attentions. "What an honor for me, monseigneur," said he.

"One word, monsieur le gouverneur, will you take the trouble to get into my carriage?" The officer placed himself opposite Fouquet in the coach.

"Monsieur," said Fouquet, "I have a service to ask of you."

"Speak, monseigneur."

"A service that will be compromising for you, monsieur, but which will assure to you forever my protection and my friendship."

"Were it to cast myself into the fire for you, monseigneur, I would do it."

"That is well," said Fouquet; "what I require is much more simple."

"That being so, monseigneur, what is it?"

"To conduct me to the chamber of Messieurs Lyodot and D'Eymeris."

"Will monseigneur have the kindness to say for what purpose?"

"I will tell you in their presence, monsieur; at the same time that I will give you ample means of palliating this escape."

"Escape! Why, then, monseigneur does not know?"

"What?"

"That Messrs. Lyodot and D'Eymeris are no longer here."

"Since when?" cried Fouquet, in great agitation.

"About a quarter of an hour."

"Whither have they gone, then?"

"To Vincennes—to the donjon."

"Who took them from here?"

"An order from the king."

"Oh! woe! woe!" exclaimed Fouquet, striking his forehead. "Woe!" and without saying a single word more to the governor, he threw himself back in his carriage, despair in his heart, and death on his countenance.

"Well!" said Pellisson, with great anxiety.

"Our friends are lost. Colbert is conveying them to the donjon. They crossed our very path under the arcade Saint-Jean."

Pellison, struck as by a thunderbolt, made no reply. With a single reproach he would have killed his master. "Where is monseigneur going?" said the footman.

"Home—to Paris. You, Pellisson, return to Saint-Mandé, and bring the Abbé Fouquet to me within an hour. Begone!"

CHAPTER IV.

PLAN OF BATTLE.

THE night was already far advanced when the Abbé Fouquet joined his brother. Gourville had accompanied him. These three men, pale with dread of future events, resembled less three powers of the day than three conspirators, united by one single thought of violence. Fouquet walked for a long time, with his eyes fixed upon the floor, striking his hands one against the other. At length, taking courage, in the midst of a deep sigh: "Abbé," said he,

"you were speaking to me only to-day of certain people you maintain!"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the abbé.

"Tell me precisely who are these people?" The abbé hesitated.

"Come! no fear, I am not threatening; no romancing, for I am not joking."

"Since you demand the truth, monseigneur, here it is:—I have a hundred and twenty friends or companions of pleasure, who are sworn to me as the thief is to the gallows."

"And you think you can depend upon them?"

"Entirely."

"And you will not compromise yourself?"

"I will not even make my appearance."

"And are they men of resolution?"

"They would burn Paris, if I promised them they should not be burnt in turn."

"The thing I ask of you, abbé," said Fouquet, wiping the sweat which fell from his brow, "is to throw your hundred and twenty men upon the people I will point out to you, at a certain moment given—is it possible?"

"It will not be the first time such a thing has happened to them, monseigneur."

"That is well: but would these bandits attack an armed force?"

"They are used to that."

"Then get your hundred and twenty men together, abbé."

"Directly. But where?"

"On the road to Vincennes, to-morrow, at two o'clock precisely."

"To carry off Lyodot and D'Eymeris? There will be blows to be got!"

"A number, no doubt; are you afraid?"

"Not for myself, but for you."

"Your men will know, then, what they have to do!"

"They are too intelligent not to guess it. Now, a minister who gets up a riot against his king—exposes himself——"

"Of what importance is that to you, I pray? Besides, if I fall, you fall with me."

"It would then be more prudent, monsieur, not to stir in the affair, and leave the king to take this little satisfaction."

"Think well of this, abbé, Lyodot and D'Eymeris at Vincennes are a prelude of ruin for my house. I repeat it—I arrested, you will be imprisoned—I imprisoned, you will be exiled."

"Monsieur, I am at your orders; have you any to give me?"

"What I told you—I wish that, to-morrow, the two financiers of whom they mean to make victims, whilst there remain so many criminals unpunished, should be snatched from the fury of my enemies. Take your measures accordingly. Is it possible?"

"It is possible."

"Describe your plan."

"It is of rich simplicity. The ordinary guard at executions consists of twelve archers."

"There will be a hundred, to-morrow."

"I reckon so. I even say more—there will be two hundred."

"Then your hundred and twenty men will not be enough."

"Pardon me. In every crowd composed of a hundred thousand spectators, there are ten thousand bandits or cutpurses—only they dare not take the initiative."

"Well?"

"There will then be, to-morrow, on the Place de Grève, which I choose as my battle-field, ten thousand auxiliaries to my hundred and twenty men. The attack commenced by the latter, the others will finish it."

"That all appears feasible. But what will be done with regard to the prisoners upon the Place de Grève?"

"This; they must be thrust into some house—that will make a siege necessary to get them out again. And stop! here is another idea, more sublime still: certain houses have two issues—one upon the Place, and the other into the Rue de la Mortellerie, or la Vennerie, or la Texeranderie. The prisoners entering by one door, will go out at another."

"Yes; but fix upon something positive."

"I am seeking to do so."

"And I," cried Fouquet, "I have found it. Listen to what has occurred to me at this moment."

"I am listening."

Fouquet made a sign to Gourville, who appeared to understand. "One of my friends lends me sometimes the keys of a house which he rents, Rue Baudoyer, the spacious gardens of which extend behind a certain house of the Place de Grève."

"That is the place for us," said the abbé. "What house?"

"A *cabaret*, pretty well frequented, whose sign represents the image of Notre Dame."

"I know it," said the abbé.

"This *cabaret* has windows opening upon the Place, a place of exit into the court, which must abut upon the gardens of my friend by a door of communication."

"Good!" said the abbé.

"Enter by the *cabaret*, take the prisoners in; defend the door while you enable them to fly by the garden and the Place Baudoyer."

"That is all plain. Monsieur, you would make an excellent general, like monsieur le prince."

"Have you understood me?"

"Perfectly well."

"How much will it amount to, to make your bandits all drunk with wine, and to satisfy them with gold?"

"Oh, monsieur, what an expression! Oh! monsieur, if they heard you! some of them are very susceptible."

"I mean to say they must be brought no longer to know the heavens from the earth; for I shall to-morrow contend with the king; and when I fight I mean to conquer—please to understand."

"It shall be done, monsieur. Give me your other ideas."

"That is your business."

"Then give me your purse."

"Gourville, count a hundred thousand livres for the abbé."

"Good! and spare nothing, did you not say?"

"Nothing."

"That is well."

"Monseigneur," objected Gourville, "if this should be known, we should lose our heads."

"Eh! Gourville," replied Fouquet, purple with anger, "you excite my pity. Speak for yourself, if you please. My head does not shake in that manner upon my shoulders. Now, abbé, is everything arranged?"

"Everything."

"At two o'clock to-morrow."

"At twelve, because it will be necessary to prepare our auxiliaries in a secret manner."

"That is true; do not spare the wine of the *cabaretier*."

"I will spare neither his wine nor his house," replied the abbé, with a sneering laugh. "I have my plan, I tell

you; leave me to set it in operation, and you shall see."

"Where shall you be yourself?"

"Everywhere; nowhere."

"And how shall I receive information?"

"By a courier, whose horse shall be kept in the very garden of your friend. *A propos*, the name of your friend?"

Fouquet looked again at Gourville. The latter came to the succor of his master, saying, "Accompanying monsieur l'abbé for several reasons, only the house is easily to be known, the 'Image-de-Notre-Dame' in the front, a garden, the only one in the quarter, behind."

"Good, good! I will go and give notice to my soldiers."

"Accompany him, Gourville," said Fouquet, "and count him down the money. One moment, abbé—one moment, Gourville—what name will be given to this carrying off?"

"A very natural one, monsieur—the Riot."

"The riot on account of what? For, if ever the people of Paris are disposed to pay their court to the king, it is when he hangs financiers."

"I will manage that," said the abbé.

"Yes; but you may manage it badly, and people will guess."

"Not at all,—not at all. I have another idea."

"What is that?"

"My men shall cry out 'Colbert, *vive* Colbert!' and shall throw themselves upon the prisoners as if they would tear them in pieces, and shall force them from the gibbets, as too mild a punishment."

"Ah! that is an idea," said Gourville. *Peste!* monsieur l'abbé, what an imagination you have!"

"Monsieur, we are worthy of our family," replied the abbé, proudly.

"Strange fellow," murmured Fouquet. Then he added, "That is ingenious. Carry it out, but shed no blood."

Gourville and the abbé set off together, with their heads full of the meditated riot. The superintendent laid himself down upon some cushions, half valiant with respect to the sinister projects of the morrow, half dreaming of love.

CHAPTER V.

THE CABARET OF THE IMAGE-DE-NOTRE-DAME.

AT two o'clock the next day fifty thousand spectators had taken their position upon the Place, around the two gibbets which had been elevated between the Quai de la Grève and the Quai Pelletier; one close to the other, with their backs to the embankment of the river. In the morning also, all the sworn criers of the good city of Paris had traversed the quarters of the city, particularly the *halles* and the *faubourgs*, announcing with their hoarse and indefatigable voices, the great justice done by the king upon two speculators, two thieves, devourers of the people. And these people, whose interests were so warmly looked after, in order not to fail in respect for their king, quitted shops, stalls, and *ateliers*, to go and evince a little gratitude to Louis XIV., absolutely like invited guests, who feared to commit an impoliteness in not repairing to the house of him who had invited them. According to the tenor of the sentence, which the criers read aloud and incorrectly, two farmers of the revenues, monopolists of money, dilapidators of the royal provisions, extortioners, and forgers, were about to undergo capital punishment on the Place de Grève, with their names blazoned over their heads,

according to their sentence. As to those names, the sentence made no mention of them. The curiosity of the Parisians was at its height, and, as we have said, an immense crowd waited with feverish impatience the hour fixed for the execution. The news had already spread that the prisoners, transferred to the Château of Vincennes, would be conducted from that prison to the Place de Grève. Consequently, the faubourg and the Rue Saint Antoine were crowded; for the population of Paris in those days of great executions was divided into two categories; those who came to see the condemned pass—these were of timid and mild hearts, but philosophically curious—and those who wished to see the condemned die—these had hearts that hungered for sensation. On this day M. d'Artagnan received his last instructions from the king, and made his adieus to his friends, the number of whom was, at the moment, reduced to Planchet, traced the plan of his day, as every busy man whose moments are counted ought to do, because he appreciates their importance.

"My departure is to be," said he, "at break of day, three o'clock in the morning; I have then fifteen hours before me. Take from them the six hours of sleep which are indispensable for me—six; one hour for repasts—seven; one hour for a farewell visit to Athos—eight; two hours for chance circumstances—total, ten. There are then five hours left. One hour to get my money,—that is, to have payment refused by M. Fouquet; another hour to go and receive my money of M. Colbert, together with his questions and grimaces; one hour to look over my clothes and arms, and get my boots cleaned. I have still two hours left. *Mordieux!* how rich I am!" And so saying, D'Artagnan felt a strange joy, a joy of youth, a perfume of those great and happy years of former times mount into his brain and intoxicate him. "During these two hours I will go," said the musketeer, "and take my

quarter's rent of the Image-de-Notre-Dame. That will be pleasant! Three hundred and seventy-five livres! *Mordious!* but that is astonishing! If the poor man who has but one livre in his pocket, found a livre and twelve deniers, that would be justice, that would be excellent; but never does such a god-send fall to the lot of the poor man. The rich man, on the contrary, makes himself revenues with his money, which he does not even touch. Here are three hundred and seventy-five livres which fall to me from heaven. I will go then to the Image-de-Notre-Dame, and drink a glass of Spanish wine with my tenant, which he cannot fail to offer me. But order must be observed, Monsieur d'Artagnan, order must be observed! Let us organize our time, then, and distribute the employment of it! Art. 1st, Athos; Art. 2d the Image-de-Notre-Dame; Art. 3rd, M. Fouquet; Art. 4th, M. Colbert; Art. 5th, supper; Art. 6th, clothes, boots, horse, portmanteau; Art. 7th and last, sleep."

In consequence of this arrangement, D'Artagnan went straight to the Comte de la Fère, to whom modestly and ingenuously, he related a part of his fortunate adventures. Athos had not been without uneasiness on the subject of D'Artagnan's visit to the king; but few words sufficed for an explanation of that. Athos divined that Louis had charged D'Artagnan with some important mission, and did not even make an effort to draw the secret from him. He only recommended him to take care of himself, and offered discreetly to accompany him if that were desirable.

"But, my dear friend," said D'Artagnan, "I am going nowhere."

"What! you come and bid me adieu, and are going nowhere?"

"Oh! yes, yes," replied D'Artagnan, coloring a little, "I am going to make an acquisition."

"That is quite another thing. Then I change my formula. Instead of 'Do not get yourself killed,' I will say—'Do not get yourself robbed.'"

"My friend, I will inform you if I set eyes on any property that pleases me, and shall expect you will favor me with your opinion."

"Yes, yes," said Athos, too delicate to permit himself even the consolation of a smile. Raoul imitated the paternal reserve. But D'Artagnan thought it would appear too mysterious to leave his friends under a pretense, without even telling them the route he was about to take.

"I have chosen Le Mans," said he to Athos. "Is it a good country?"

"Excellent, my friend," replied the count, without making him observe that Le Mans was in the same direction as La Touraine, and that by waiting two days, at most, he might travel with a friend. But D'Artagnan, more embarrassed than the count, dug, at every explanation, deeper into the mud, into which he sank by degrees. "I shall set out to-morrow at day-break," said he at last. "Till that time, will you come with me, Raoul?"

"Yes, monsieur le chevalier," said the young man, "if monsieur le comte does not want me."

"No, Raoul; I am to have an audience to-day of Monsieur, the king's brother; that is all I have to do."

Raoul asked Grimaud for his sword, which the old man brought him immediately. "Now then," added D'Artagnan, opening his arms to Athos, "adieu, my dear friend!" Athos held him in a long embrace, and the musketeer, who knew his discretion so well, murmured in his ear—"An affair of state," to which Athos only replied by a pressure of the hand, still more significant. They then separated. Raoul took the arm of his old friend, who led him along the Rue Saint-Honoré. "I am conducting

you to the abode of the god Plutus," said D'Artagnan to the young man; "prepare yourself. The whole day you will witness the piling-up of crowns. Heavens! how I am changed!"

"Oh! what numbers of people there are in the street!" said Raoul.

"Is there a procession to-day?" asked D'Artagnan of a passer-by.

"Monsieur, it is a hanging," replied the man.

"What! a hanging at the Grève?" said D'Artagnan,

"Yes, monsieur."

"The devil take the rogue who gets himself hung the day I want to go and take my rent!" cried D'Artagnan.

"Raoul, did you ever see anybody hung?"

"Never, monsieur—thank God!"

"Oh! how young that sounds! If you were on guard in the trenches, as I was, and a spy!—But, pardon me, Raoul, I am doting—you are quite right, it is a hideous sight to see a person hung! At what hour do they hang them, monsieur, if you please?"

"Monsieur," replied the stranger respectfully, delighted at joining conversation with two men of the sword; "it will take place about three o'clock."

"Aha! it is now only half-past one; let us step out, we shall be there in time to touch my three hundred and seventy-five livres, and get away before the arrival of the malefactor."

"Malefactors, monsieur," continued the *bourgeois*; "there are two of them."

"Monsieur I return you many thanks," said D'Artagnan, who as he grew older, had become polite to a degree. Drawing Raoul along, he directed his course rapidly in the direction of La Grève. Without that great experience musketeers have of a crowd, to which were joined an irresistible strength of wrist and an uncommon suppleness of

shoulders, our two travelers would not have arrived at their place of destination. They followed the line of the *Quai*, which they had gained on quitting the Rue Saint-Honoré, where they left Athos. D'Artagnan went first; his elbow, his wrist, his shoulder formed three wedges which he knew how to insinuate with skill into the groups, to make them split and separate like firewood. He made use sometimes of the hilt of his sword as an additional help: introducing it between ribs that were too rebellious, making it take the part of a lever or crow-bar, to separate husband from wife, uncle from nephew, and brother from brother. And all this was done so naturally, and with such gracious smiles, that people must have had ribs of bronze, not to cry thank you when the wrist made its play, or hearts of diamond not to be enchanted when such a bland smile enlivened the lips of the musketeer. Raoul, following his friend, cajoled the women who admired his beauty, pushed back the men, who felt the rigidity of his muscles, and both opened, thanks to these maneuvers, the compact and muddy tide of the populace. They arrived in sight of the two gibbets, from which Raoul turned away his eyes in disgust. As for D'Artagnan, he did not even see them; his house with its gabled roof, its windows crowded with the curious, attracted and even absorbed all the attention he was capable of. He distinguished in the Place and around the houses a good number of musketeers on leave, who, some with women, others with friends, awaited the crowning ceremony. What rejoiced him above all was to see that his tenant, the *cabaretier*, was so busy he hardly knew which way to turn. Three lads could not supply the drinkers. They filled the shop, the chambers, and the court even. D'Artagnan called Raoul's attention to this concourse, adding: "The fellow will have no excuse for not paying his rent. Look at those drinkers, Raoul, one would say they were jolly companions. *Mor-*

dioux! why, there is no room anywhere!" D'Artagnan, however, contrived to catch hold of the master by the corner of his apron, and to make himself known to him."

"Ah, monsieur le chevalier," said the *cabaretier*, half distracted, "one minute if you please. I have here a hundred mad devils turning my cellar upside down."

"The cellar, if you like, but not the money box."

"Oh, monsieur, your thirty-seven and a half pistoles are all counted out ready for you, upstairs in my chamber; but there are in that chamber thirty customers, who are sucking the staves of a little barrel of Oporto which I tapped for them this very morning. Give me a minute,—only a minute?"

"So be it; so be it."

"I will go," said Raoul, in a low voice, to D'Artagnan; "this hilarity is vile!"

"Monsieur," replied D'Artagnan, sternly, "you will please to remain where you are. The soldier ought to familiarize himself with all kinds of spectacles. There are in the eye, when it is young, fibres which we must learn how to harden; and we are not truly generous and good save from the moment when the eye has become hardened, and the heart remains tender. Besides, my little Raoul, would you leave me alone here? That would be very wrong of you. Look, there is yonder in the lower court a tree, and under the shade of that tree we shall breathe more freely than in this hot atmosphere of spilt wine."

From the spot on which they had placed themselves the two new guests of the Image-de-Notre-Dame, heard the ever-increasing hubbub of the tide of people, and lost neither a cry nor a gesture of the drinkers, at tables in the *cabaret*, or disseminated in the chambers. If D'Artagnan had wished to place himself as a *vidette* for an expedition, he could not have succeeded better. The tree under

which he and Raoul were seated covered them with its already thick foliage; it was a low, thick chestnut-tree, with inclined branches, that cast their shade over a table so dilapidated the drinkers had abandoned it. We said that from this post D'Artagnan saw everything. He observed the goings and comings of the waiters; the arrival of fresh drinkers; the welcome, sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile, given to the new-comers, by others already installed. He observed all this to amuse himself, for the thirty-seven and a half pistoles were a long time coming. Raoul recalled his attention to it. "Monsieur," said he, "you do not hurry your tenant, and the condemned will soon be here. There will then be such a press we shall not be able to get out."

"You are right," said the musketer, "*Holà! oh! somebody there! Mordieu!*" But it was in vain he cried and knocked upon the wreck of the old table, which fell to pieces beneath his fist; nobody came. D'Artagnan was preparing to go and seek the *cabaretier* himself, to force him to a definite explanation, when the door of the court in which he was with Raoul, a door which communicated with the garden situated at the back, opened, and a man dressed as a cavalier, with his sword in the sheath, but not at his belt, crossed the court without closing the door; and having cast an oblique glance at D'Artagnan and his companion, directed his course towards the *cabaret* itself, looking about in all directions with his eyes capable of piercing walls of consciences. "Humph!" said D'Artagnan, "my tenants are communicating. That, no doubt, now, is some amateur in hanging matters." At the same moment, the cries and disturbance in the upper chambers ceased. Silence, under such circumstances, surprises more than a twofold increase of noise. D'Artagnan wished to see what was the cause of this sudden silence. He then perceived that

this man, dressed as a cavalier, had just entered the principal chamber, and was haranguing the tipplers, who all listened to him with the greatest attention. D'Artagnan would perhaps have heard his speech but for the dominant noise of the popular clamors, which made a formidable accompaniment to the harangue of the orator. But it was soon finished, and all the people the *cabaret* contained came out, one after the other, in little groups, so that there only remained six in the chamber; one of these six, the man with the sword, took the *cabaretier* aside, engaging him in discourse more or less serious, whilst the others lit a great fire in the chimney-place—a circumstance rendered strange by the fine weather and the heat.

"It is very singular," said D'Artagnan to Raoul, "but I think I know those faces yonder."

"Don't you think you can smell the smoke here?" said Raoul.

"I rather think I can smell a conspiracy," replied D'Artagnan.

He had not finished speaking, when four of these men came down into the court, and without the appearance of any bad design, mounted guard at the door of communication, casting, at intervals, glances at D'Artagnan, which signified many things.

"*Mordioux!*" said D'Artagnan, in a low voice, "there is something going on. Are you curious, Raoul?"

"According to the subject, chevalier."

"Well, I am as curious as an old woman. Come a little more in front; we shall get a better view of the place. I would lay a wager that view will be something curious."

"But you know, monsieur le chevalier, that I am not willing to become a passive and indifferent spectator of the death of the two poor devils."

"And I, then—do you think I am a savage? We will

go in again, when it is time to do so. Come along!" And they made their way towards the front of the house, and placed themselves near the window which, still more strangely than the rest, remained unoccupied. The two last drinkers, instead of looking out at this window, kept up the fire. On seeing D'Artagnan and his friend enter:—"Ah! ah! a reinforcement," murmured they.

D'Artagnan jogged Raoul's elbow. "Yes, my braves, a reinforcement," said he; "*cordieu!* there is a famous fire. Whom are you going to cook?"

The two men uttered a shout of jovial laughter, and, instead of answering, threw on more wood. D'Artagnan could not take his eyes off them.

"I suppose," said one of the fire-makers, "they sent you to tell us the time—did not they?"

"Without doubt they have," said D'Artagnan, anxious to know what was going on; "why should I be here else, if it were not for that?"

"Then place yourself at the window, if you please, and observe." D'Artagnan smiled in his mustache, made a sign to Raoul, and placed himself at the window.

CHAPTER VI.

VIVE COLBERT!

THE spectacle which the Grève now presented was a frightful one. The heads, leveled by the perspective, extended afar, thick and agitated as the ears of corn in a vast plain. From time to time a fresh report, or a distant rumor, made the heads oscillate and thousands of eyes flash. Now and then there were great movements. All those ears of corn bent, and became waves more agitated than

those of the ocean, which rolled from the extremities to the center, and beat, like the tides, against the hedge of archers who surrounded the gibbets. Then the handles of the halberds were let fall upon the heads and shoulders of the rash invaders; at times, also, it was the steel as well as the wood, and, in that case, a large empty circle was formed around the guard; a space conquered upon the extremities, which underwent, in their turn the oppression of the sudden movement, which drove them against the parapets of the Seine. From the window, that commanded a view of the whole Place, D'Artagnan saw, with interior satisfaction, that such of the musketeers and guards as found themselves involved in the crowd, were able, with blows of their fists and the hilts of their swords, to keep room. He even remarked that they had succeeded, by that *esprit de corps* which doubles the strength of the soldier, in getting together in one group to the amount of about fifty men; and that, with the exception of a dozen stragglers whom he still saw rolling here and there, the nucleus was complete, and within reach of his voice. But it was not the musketeers and guards only that drew the attention of D'Artagnan. Around the gibbets, and particularly at the entrances to the arcade of Saint-Jean, moved a noisy mass, a busy mass; daring faces, resolute demeanors were to be seen here and there, mingled with silly faces and indifferent demeanors; signals were exchanged, hands given and taken. D'Artagnan remarked among the groups, and those groups the most animated, the face of the cavalier whom he had seen enter by the door of communication from his garden, and who had gone upstairs to harangue the drinkers. That man was organizing troops and giving orders.

"*Mordieu!*" said D'Artagnan to himself, "I was not deceived; I know that man,—it is Menneville. What the devil is he doing here!"

A distant murmur, which became more distinct by degrees, stopped this reflection, and drew his attention another way. This murmur was occasioned by the arrival of the culprits; a strong picket of archers preceded them, and appeared at the angle of the arcade. The entire crowd now joined as if in one cry; all the cries united formed one immense howl. D'Artagnan saw Raoul was becoming pale, and he slapped him roughly on the shoulder. The fire-keepers turned round on hearing the great cry, and asked what was going on. "The condemned are arrived," said D'Artagnan. "That's well," replied they, again replenishing the fire. D'Artagnan looked at them with much uneasiness; it was ovident that these men who were making such a fire for no apparent purpose had some strange intentions. The condemned appeared upon the Place. They were walking, the executioner before them, whilst fifty archers formed a hedge on their right and their left. Both were dressed in black; they appeared pale, but firm. They looked impatiently over the people's heads, standing on tip-toe at every step. D'Artagnan remarked this. "*Mordieux!*" cried he, "they are in a great hurry to get a sight of the gibbet!" Raoul drew back, without, however, having the power to leave the window. Terror even has its attractions.

"To the death! to the death!" cried fifty thousand voices.

"Yes; to the death!" howled a hundred frantic others, as if the great mass had given them the reply.

"To the halter! to the halter!" cried the great whole; "*Vive le roi!*"

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "this is droll; I should have thought it was M. Colbert who had caused them to be hung."

There was, at this moment, a great rolling movement in the crowd, which stopped for a moment the march of

the condemned. The people of a bold and resolute mien, whom D'Artagnan had observed, by dint of pressing, pushing, and lifting themselves up, had succeeded in almost touching the hedge of archers. The *cortège* resumed its march. All at once, to cries of "*Vive Colbert!*" those men, of whom D'Artagnan never lost sight, fell upon the escort, which in vain endeavored to stand against them. Behind these men was the crowd. Then commenced, amidst a frightful tumult, as frightful a confusion. This time, there was something more than cries of expectation or cries of joy, there were cries of pain. Halberds struck men down, swords ran them through, muskets were discharged at them. The confusion became then so great that D'Artagnan could no longer distinguish anything. Then, from this chaos, suddenly surged something like a visible intention, like a will pronounced. The condemned had been torn from the hands of the guards, and were being dragged towards the house of L'Image-de-Notre-Dame. Those who dragged them shouted, "*Vive Colbert!*" The people hesitated, not knowing which they ought to fall upon, the archers or the aggressors. What stopped the people was, that those who cried "*Vive Colbert!*" began to cry, at the same time, "No halter! No halter! to the fire! to the fire! burn the thieves! burn the extortioners!" This cry, shouted with an *ensemble*, obtained enthusiastic success. The populace had come to witness an execution, and here was an opportunity offered them of performing one themselves. It was this that must be most agreeable to the populace: therefore, they ranged themselves immediately on the party of the aggressors against the archers, crying with the minority, which had become, thanks to them, the most compact majority. "Yes, yes; to the fire with the thieves! *Vive Colbert!*" "*Mordieu!*" exclaimed D'Artagnan, "this begins to look serious."



SNATCHED THE BRAND FROM THE HAND OF THE INCENDIARY.

One of the men who remained near the chimney approached the window, a firebrand in his hand. "Ah, ah!" said he, "it gets warm." Then, turning to his companion, "There is the signal," added he; and he immediately applied the burning brand to the wainscoting. Now, this *cabaret* of the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame was not a very newly-built house; and therefore, did not require much entreating to take fire. In a second the boards began to crackle, and the flames arose sparkling to the ceiling. A howling from without replied to the shouts of the incendiaries. D'Artagnan, who had not seen what passed, from being engaged at the window, felt, at the same time, the smoke which choked him and the fire that scorched him. "*Hold!*" cried he, turning round, "is the fire here? Are you drunk or mad, my masters?"

The two men looked at each other with an air of astonishment. "In what?" asked they of D'Artagnan; "was it not a thing agreed upon?"

"A thing agreed upon that you should burn my house!" vociferated D'Artagnan, snatching the brand from the hand of the incendiary, and striking him with it across the face. The second wanted to assist his comrade, but Raoul, seizing him by the middle, threw him out of the window, whilst D'Artagnan pushed his man down the stairs. Raoul, first disengaged, tore the burning wainscoting down, and threw it flaming into the chamber. At a glance, D'Artagnan saw there was nothing to be feared from the fire, and sprang to the window. The disorder was at its height. The air was filled with simultaneous cries of "To the fire!" "To the death!" "To the halter!" "To the stake!" "*Vive Colbert!*" "*Vive le roi!*" The group which had forced the culprits from the hands of the archers had drawn close to the house, which appeared to be the goal towards which they dragged them. Men-

neville was at the head of this group, shouting louder than all the others, "To the fire! to the fire! *Vive Colbert!*" D'Artagnan began to comprehend what was meant. They wanted to burn the condemned, and his house was to serve as a funeral pile.

"Halt, there!" cried he, sword in hand, and one foot upon the window. "Menneville, what do you want to do?"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," cried the latter; "give way, give way!"

"To the fire! to the fire with the thieves! *Vive Colbert!*"

These cries exasperated D'Artagnan. "*Mordieux!*" said he. "What! burn the poor devils who are only condemned to be hung? that is infamous!"

Before the door, however, the mass of anxious spectators, rolled back against the walls, had become more thick, and closed up the way. Menneville and his men, who were dragging along the culprits, were within ten paces of the door.

Menneville made a last effort. "Passage! passage!" cried he, pistol in hand.

"Burn them! burn them!" repeated the crowd. "The Image-de-Notre-Dame is on fire! Burn the thieves! burn the monopolists in the Image-de-Notre-Dame!"

There now remained no doubt, it was plainly D'Artagnan's house that was their object. D'Artagnan remembered the old cry, always so effective from his mouth: "*À moi! mousquetaires!*" shouted he, with the voice of a giant, with one of those voices which dominate over cannon, the sea, the tempest. "*À moi! mousquetaires!*" And suspending himself by the arm from the balcony, he allowed himself to drop amidst the crowd, which began to draw back from a house that rained men. Raoul was on the ground as soon as he, both sword in hand. All the musket-

eers on the Place heard that challenging cry—all turned round at that cry, and recognized D'Artagnan. "To the captain, to the captain!" cried they, in their turn. And the crowd opened before them as though before the prow of a vessel. At that moment D'Artagnan and Menneville found themselves face to face. "Passage, passage!" cried Menneville, seeing that he was within an arm's length of the door.

"No one passes here," said D'Artagnan.

"Take that, then!" said Menneville, firing his pistol, almost within arm's-length. But before the cock fell, D'Artagnan had struck up Menneville's arm with the hilt of his sword, and passed the blade through his body.

"I told you plainly to keep yourself quiet," said D'Artagnan to Menneville, who rolled at his feet.

"Passage! passage!" cried the companions of Menneville, at first terrified, but soon recovering, when they found they had only to do with two men. But those two men were hundred-armed giants; the swords flew about in their hands like the burning *glaive* of the archangel. They pierce with its point, strike with the flat, cut with the edge; every stroke brings down a man. "For the king!" cried D'Artagnan, to every man he struck at, that is to say, to every man that fell. This cry became the charging word for the musketeers, who, guided by it, joined D'Artagnan. During this time the archers, recovering from the panic they had undergone, charge the aggressors in the rear, and regular as mill-strokes, overturn or knock down all that oppose them. The crowd, which sees swords gleaming, and drops of blood flying in the air—the crowd falls back and crushes itself. At length cries for mercy and of despair resound; that is, the farewell of the vanquished. The two condemned are again in the hands of the archers. D'Artagnan approaches them, seeing them pale and sinking:

"Console yourselves, poor men," said he, "you will not undergo the frightful torture with which these wretches threatened you. The king has condemned you to be hung: you shall only be hung. Go on, hang them, and it will be over."

There is no longer anything going on at the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame. The fire has been extinguished with two tuns of wine in default of water. The conspirators have fled by the garden. The archers were dragging the culprits to the gibbets. From this moment the affair did not occupy much time. The executioner, heedless about operating according to the rules of art, made such haste, that he dispatched the condemned in a couple of minutes. In the meantime the people gathered around D'Artagnan,—they felicitated, they cheered him. He wiped his brow, streaming with sweat, and his sword, streaming with blood. He shrugged his shoulders at seeing Menneville writhing at his feet in the last convulsions. And, while Raoul turned away his eyes in compassion, he pointed to the musketeers the gibbets laden with their melancholy fruit. "Poor devils!" said he, "I hope they died blessing me, for I saved them with great difficulty." These words caught the ear of Menneville at the moment when he himself was breathing his last sigh. A dark, ironical smile flitted across his lips; he wished to reply, but the effort hastened the snapping of the chord of life—he expired.

"Oh! all this is very frightful!" murmured Raoul: "let us begone, monsieur le chevalier."

"You are not wounded?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Not at all; thank you."

"That's well! Thou art a brave fellow, *inordinaire!* The head of the father, and the arm of Porthos. Ah! if he had been here, good Porthos, you would have seen

something worth looking at." Then as if by way of remembrance—

"But where the devil can that brave Porthos be?" murmured D'Artagnan.

"Come, chevalier, pray come away," urged Raoul.

"One minute, my friend; let me take my thirty-seven and a half pistoles, and I am at your service. The house is a good property," added D'Artagnan, as he entered the Image-de-Notre-Dame, "but decidedly, even if it were less profitable, I should prefer its being in another quarter."

CHAPTER VII.

HOW M. D'EYMERIS'S DIAMOND PASSED INTO THE HANDS OF M. D'ARTAGNAN.

WHILST this violent, noisy, and bloody scene was passing on the Grève, several men, barricaded behind the gate of communication with the garden, replaced their swords in their sheaths, assisted one among them to mount a ready saddled horse which was waiting in the garden, and like a flock of startled birds, fled in all directions, some climbing the walls, others rushing out at the gates with all the fury of a panic. He who mounted the horse, and gave him the spur so sharply that the animal was near leaping the wall, this cavalier, we say, crossed the Place Baudoyer, passed like lightning before the crowd in the streets, riding against, running over, and knocking down all that came in his way, and, ten minutes after, arrived at the gates of the superintendent, more out of breath than his horse. The Abbé Fouquet, at the clatter of the hoofs on the pavement, appeared at a window of the court, and

before even the cavalier had set foot to the ground, "Well! Danecamp?" cried he, leaning half out of the window.

"Well, it is all over," replied the cavalier.

"All over!" cried the abbé. "Then they are saved?"

"No, monsieur," replied the cavalier, "they are hung."

"Hung!" repeated the abbé, turning pale. A lateral door suddenly opened, and Fouquet appeared in the chamber, pale, distracted, with lips half opened, breathing a cry of grief and anger. He stopped upon the threshold to listen to what was addressed from the court to the window.

"Miserable wretches!" said the abbé, "you did not fight, then?"

"Like lions."

"Say like cowards."

"Monsieur!"

"A hundred men accustomed to war, sword in hand, are worth ten thousand archers in a surprise. Where is Menneville, that boaster, that braggart, who was to come back either dead or a conqueror?"

"Well, monsieur, he has kept his word. He is dead!"

"Dead! Who killed him?"

"A demon disguised as a man, a giant armed with ten flaming swords—a madman, who at one blow extinguished the fire, put down the riot, and caused a hundred musketeers to rise up out of the pavement of the Grève."

Fouquet raised his brow, streaming with sweat, murmuring, "Oh! Lyodot and D'Eymeris! dead! dead! dead! and I dishonored."

The abbé turned round, and perceiving his brother, despairing and livid, "Come, come," said he, "it is a blow of fate, monsieur; we must not lament thus. Our attempt has failed, because God——"

"Be silent, abbé! be silent!" cried Fouquet; "your

excuses are blasphemies. Order that man up here, and let him relate the details of this terrible event."

"But, brother——"

"Obey, monsieur!"

The abbé made a sign, and in half a minute the man's step was heard upon the stairs. At the same time Gourville appeared behind Fouquet, like the guardian angel of the superintendent, pressing one finger on his lips to enjoin observation even amidst the bursts of his grief. The minister resumed all the serenity that human strength left at the disposal of a heart half broken with sorrow. Danecamp appeared. "Make your report," said Gourville.

"Monsieur," replied the messenger, "we received orders to carry off the prisoners, and to cry '*Vive Colbert!*' whilst carrying them off."

"To burn them alive, was it not, abbé?" interrupted Gourville.

"Yes, yes, the order was given to Menneville. Menneville knew what was to be done, and Menneville is dead."

This news appeared rather to reassure Gourville than to sadden him.

"Yes, certainly to burn them alive," said the abbé, eagerly.

"Granted, monsieur, granted," said the man, looking into the eyes and the faces of the two interlocutors, to ascertain what there was profitable or disadvantageous to himself in telling the truth.

"Now, proceed," said Gourville.

"The prisoners," cried Danecamp, "were brought to the Grève, and the people, in a fury, insisted upon their being burnt instead of being hung."

"And the people were right," said the abbé. "Go on."

"But," resumed the man, "at the moment the archers were broken, at the moment the fire was set to one of the

houses of the Place destined to serve as a funeral-pile for the guilty, this fury, this demon, this giant of whom I told you, and who, we had been informed, was the proprietor of the house in question, aided by a young man who accompanied him, threw out of the window those who kept up the fire, called to his assistance the musketeers who were in the crowd, leaped himself from the window of the first story into the Place, and plied his sword so desperately that the victory was restored to the archers, the prisoners were retaken, and Menneville killed. When once recaptured, the condemned were executed in three minutes." Fouquet, in spite of his self-command, could not prevent a deep groan escaping him.

"And this man, the proprietor of the house, what is his name?" said the abbé.

"I cannot tell you, not having even been able to get sight of him; my post had been appointed in the garden, and I remained at my post: only the affair was related to me as I repeat it. I was ordered, when once the affair was at an end, to come at best speed and announce to you the manner in which it finished. According to this order, I set out, full gallop, and here I am."

"Very well, monsieur, we have nothing else to ask of you," said the abbé, more and more dejected, in proportion as the moment approached for finding himself alone with his brother.

"Have you been paid?" asked Gourville.

"Partly, monsieur," replied Danecamp.

"Here are twenty pistoles. Begone, monsieur, and never forget to defend, as this time has been done, the true interests of the king."

"Yes, monsieur," said the man, bowing and pocketing the money. After which he went out. Scarcely had the door closed after him when Fouquet, who had remained motionless, advanced with a rapid step and stood be-

tween the abbé and Gourville. Both of them at the same time opened their mouths to speak to him. "No excuses," said he, "no recriminations against anybody. If I had not been a false friend I should not have confided to any one the care of delivering Lyodot and D'Eymeris. I alone am guilty; to me alone are reproaches and remorse due. Leave me, abbé."

"And yet, monsieur, you will not prevent me," replied the latter, "from endeavoring to find out the miserable fellow who has intervened to the advantage of M. Colbert in this so well-arranged affair; for, if it is good policy to love our friends dearly, I do not believe that is bad which consists in obstinately pursuing our enemies."

"A truce to policy, abbé; begone, I beg of you, and do not let me hear any more of you till I send for you; what we most need is circumspection and silence. You have a terrible example before you, gentlemen: no reprisals, I forbid them."

"There are no orders," grumbled the abbé, "which will prevent me from avenging a family affront upon the guilty person."

"And I," cried Fouquet, in that imperative tone to which one feels there is nothing to reply, "if you entertain one thought, one single thought, which is not the absolute expression of my will, I will have you cast into the Bastille two hours after that thought has manifested itself. Regulate your conduct accordingly, abbé."

The abbé colored and bowed. Fouquet made a sign to Gourville to follow him, and was already directing his steps towards his cabinet, when the usher announced with a loud voice: "Monsieur le Chevalier d'Artagnan."

"Who is he," said Fouquet, negligently, to Gourville.

"An ex-lieutenant of his majesty's musketeers," replied Gourville, in the same tone. Fouquet did not even take the trouble to reflect, and resumed his walk. "I beg your

"pardon, monseigneur!" said Gourville, "but I have remembered; this brave man has quitted the king's service, and probably comes to receive an installment of some pension or other."

"Devil take him!" said Fouquet, "why does he choose his opportunity so ill?"

"Permit me then, monseigneur, to announce your refusal to him; for he is one of my acquaintance, and is a man whom, in our present circumstances, it would be better to have as a friend than an enemy."

"Answer him as you please," said Fouquet.

"Eh! good Lord!" said the abbé, still full of malice, like an egotistical man; "tell him there is no money, particularly for musketeers."

But scarcely had the abbé uttered this imprudent speech, when the partly-open door was thrown back, and D'Artagnan appeared.

"Eh! Monsieur Fouquet," said he, "I was well aware there was no money for musketeers here. Therefore I did not come to obtain any, but to have it refused. That being done, receive my thanks. I give you good-day, and will go and seek it at M. Colbert's." And he went out, making an easy bow.

"Gourville," said Fouquet, "run after that man and bring him back." Gourville obeyed, and overtook D'Artagnan on the stairs.

D'Artagnan, hearing steps behind him, turned round and perceived Gourville. "*Mordieu!* my dear monsieur," said he, "these are sad lessons which you gentlemen of finance teach us;—I come to M. Fouquet to receive a sum accorded by his majesty, and I am received like a mendicant who comes to ask charity, or a thief who comes to steal a piece of plate."

"But you pronounced the name of M. Colbert, my dear M. d'Artagnan; you said you were going to M. Colbert's?"

"I certainly am going there, were it only to ask satisfaction of the people who try to burn houses, crying ' *Vive Colbert!* ' "

Gourville pricked up his ears. "Oh, oh!" said he, "you allude to what has just happened at the Grève?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And in what did that which has taken place concern you?"

"What! do you ask me whether it concerns me or does not concern me, if M. Colbert pleases to make a funeral-pile of my house?"

"So ho, *your* house—was it *your* house they wanted to burn!"

"*Pardieu!* was it!"

"Is the *cabaret* of the Image-de-Notre-Dame yours, then?"

"It has been this week."

"Well, then, are you the brave captain, are you the valiant blade who dispersed those who wished to burn the condemned?"

"My dear Monsieur Gourville, put yourself in my place. I was an agent of the public force and a landlord, too. As a captain, it is my duty to have the orders of the king accomplished. As a proprietor, it is to my interest my house should not be burnt. I have at the same time attended to the laws of interest and duty in replacing Messrs. Lyodot and D'Eymeris in the hands of the archers."

"Then it was you who threw the man out of the window?"

"It was I, myself," replied D'Artagnan, modestly.

"And you who killed Menneville?"

"I had that misfortune," said D'Artagnan, bowing like a man who is being congratulated.

"It was you then, in short, who caused the two condemned persons to be hung?"

"Instead of being burnt, yes, monsieur, and I am proud of it. I saved the poor devils from horrible tortures. Understand, my dear Monsieur de Gourville, that they wanted to burn them alive? It exceeds imagination!"

"Go, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan, go," said Gourville, anxious to spare Fouquet the sight of the man who had just caused him such profound grief.

"No," said Fouquet, who had heard all from the door of the antechamber; "not so; on the contrary, Monsieur d'Artagnan, come in."

D'Artagnan wiped from the hilt of his sword a last bloody trace, which had escaped his notice, and returned. He then found himself face to face with these three men, whose countenances wore very different expressions. With the abbé it was anger, with Gourville stupor, with Fouquet it was dejection.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur le ministre," said D'Artagnan, "but my time is short; I have to go to the office of the intendant, to have an explanation with Monsieur Colbert, and to receive my quarter's pension."

"But, monsieur," said Fouquet, "there is money here." D'Artagnan looked at the superintendent with astonishment. "You have been answered inconsiderately, monsieur, I know, because I heard it;" said the minister; "a man of your merit ought to be known by everybody." D'Artagnan bowed. "Have you an order?" added Fouquet.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Give it me, I will pay you myself; come with me." He made a sign to Gourville and the abbé, who remained in the chamber where they were. He led D'Artagnan into his cabinet. As soon as the door was shut, "How much is due to you, monsieur?"

"Why, something like five thousand livres, monsieur."

"For arrears of pay?"

"For a quarter's pay."

"A quarter consisting of five thousand livres!" said Fouquet, fixing upon the musketeer a searching look. "Does the king, then, give you twenty thousand livres a year?"

"Yes, monseigneur, twenty thousand livres a year. Do you think it is too much?"

"I?" cried Fouquet, and he smiled bitterly. "If I had any knowledge of mankind, if I were—instead of being a frivolous, inconsequent, and vain spirit—of a prudent and reflective spirit; if, in a word, I had, as certain persons have known how, regulated my life, you would not receive twenty thousand livres a year, but a hundred thousand, and you would not belong to the king but to me."

D'Artagnan colored slightly. There is sometimes in the manner in which an eulogium is given, in the voice, in the affectionate tone, a poison so sweet, that the strongest mind is intoxicated by it. The superintendent terminated his speech by opening a drawer, and taking from it four *rouleaux*, which he placed before D'Artagnan. The Gascon opened one. "Gold!" said he.

"It will be less burdensome, monsieur."

"But then, monsieur, these make twenty thousand livres."

"No doubt they do."

"But only five are due to me."

"I wish to spare you the trouble of coming four times to my office."

"You overwhelm me, monsieur."

"I do only what I ought to do, monsieur le chevalier; and I hope you will not bear me any malice on account of the rude reception my brother gave you. He is of a sour, capricious disposition."

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "believe me, nothing would grieve me more than an excuse from you."

"Therefore I will make no more, and will content myself with asking you a favor."

"Oh, monsieur."

Fouquet drew from his finger a ring worth about a thousand pistoles. "Monsieur," said he, "this stone was given me by a friend of my childhood, by a man to whom you have rendered a great service."

"A service—I?" said the musketeer; "I have rendered a service to one of your friends?"

"You cannot have forgotten it, monsieur, for it dates this very day."

"And that friend's name was——?"

"M. d'Eymeris."

"One of the condemned?"

"Yes, one of the victims. Well! Monsieur d'Artagnan, in return for the service you have rendered him, I beg you to accept this diamond. Do so for my sake."

"Monsieur! you——"

"Accept it, I say. To-day is with me a day of mourning; hereafter you will, perhaps, learn why; to-day I have lost one friend; well, I will try to get another."

"But, Monsieur Fouquet——"

"Adieu! Monsieur d'Artagnan, adieu!" cried Fouquet, with much emotion; "or rather, *au revoir*." And the minister quitted the cabinet, leaving in the hands of the musketeer the ring and the twenty thousand livres.

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, after a moment's dark reflection. "How on earth am I to understand what this means? *Mordieu!* I can understand this much, only: he is a gallant man! I will go and explain matters to M. Colbert." And he went out.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE NOTABLE DIFFERENCE D'ARTAGNAN FINDS BETWEEN
MONSIEUR THE INTENDANT AND MONSIEUR THE SUPERIN-
TENDENT.

M. COLBERT resided in the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs, in a house which had belonged to Beautru. D'Artagnan's legs cleared the distance in a short quarter of an hour. When he arrived at the residence of the new favorite, the court was full of archers and police, who came to congratulate him, or to excuse themselves, according to whether he should choose to praise or blame. The sentiment of flattery is instinctive with people of abject condition; they have the sense of it, as the wild animal has that of hearing and smell. These people, or their leader, understood that there was a pleasure to offer to M. Colbert, in rendering him an account of the fashion in which his name had been pronounced during the rash enterprise of the morning. D'Artagnan made his appearance just as the chief of the watch was giving his report. He stood close to the door, behind the archers. That officer took Colbert on one side, in spite of his resistance and the contraction of his bushy eyebrows. "In case," said he, "you really desired, monsieur, that the people should do justice on the two traitors, it would have been wise to warn us of it; for, indeed, monsieur, in spite of our regret at displeasing you, or thwarting your views, we had our orders to execute."

"Triple fool!" replied Colbert, furiously shaking his hair, thick and black as a mane; "what are you telling

justice upon Menneville and restored things to order."

Colbert opened his eyes and interrogated the chief of the watch with a look—"Ah! it is very true," said the latter, "that this gentleman saved us."

"Why did you not tell me, monsieur, that you came to relate me this?" said Colbert with envy; "everything is explained, and more favorably for you than for any body else."

"You are in error, monsieur l'intendant, I did not at all come for the purpose of relating that to you."

"It is an exploit, nevertheless."

"Oh!" said the musketeer carelessly, "constant habit blunts the mind."

"To what do I owe the honor of your visit, then!"

"Simply to this: the king ordered me to come to you."

"Ah!" said Colbert, recovering himself, when he saw D'Artagnan draw a paper from his pocket; "it is to demand some money of me?"

"Precisely, Monsieur."

"Have the goodness to wait, if you please, monsieur, till I have dispatched the report of the watch."

D'Artagnan turned upon his heel, insolently enough, and finding himself face to face with Colbert, after his first turn, he bowed to him as a harlequin would have done; then, after a second evolution, he directed his steps towards the door in quick time. Colbert was struck with this pointed rudeness, to which he was not accustomed. In general, men of the sword, when they came to his office, had such a want of money, that though their feet seemed to take root in the marble, they hardly lost their patience. Was D'Artagnan going straight to the king? Would he go and describe his rough reception, or recount his exploit? This was a matter for grave consideration. At all events, the moment was badly chosen to send D'Artagnan away, whether he came from the king, or on his

own account. The musketeer had rendered too great a service, and that too recently, for it to be already forgotten. Therefore Colbert thought it would be better to shake off his arrogance and call D'Artagnan back. "Ho! Monsieur D'Artagnan," cried Colbert, "what! are you leaving me thus?"

D'Artagnan turned round: "Why not?" said he, quietly, "we have no more to say to each other, have we?"

"You have at least money to receive, as you have an order?"

"Who, I? Oh! not at all, my dear Monsieur Colbert."

"But, monsieur, you have an order. And, in the same manner as you give a sword-thrust, when you are required, I, on my part, pay when an order is presented to me. Present yours."

"It is useless, my dear Monsieur Colbert," said D'Artagnan, who inwardly enjoyed this confusion in the ideas of Colbert; "my order is paid."

"Paid, by whom?"

"By monsieur le surintendant."

Colbert grew pale.

"Explain yourself," said he, in a stifled voice—"if you are paid why do you show me that paper?"

"In consequence of the word of order of which you spoke to me so ingeniously just now, dear M. Colbert; the king told me to take a quarter of the pension he is pleased to make me."

"Of me?" said Colbert.

"Not exactly. The king said to me: 'Go to M. Fouquet; the superintendent will, perhaps, have no money, then you will go and draw it of M. Colbert.'"

The countenance of M. Colbert brightened for a moment; but it was with his unfortunate physiognomy as with a stormy sky, sometimes radiant, sometimes dark as night,

according as the lightning-gleams or the cloud passes. "Eh! and was there any money in the superintendent's coffers?" asked he.

"Why, yes, he could not be badly off for money," replied D'Artagnan—"it may be believed, since M. Fouquet, instead of paying me a quarter or five thousand livres——"

"A quarter or five thousand livres!" cried Colbert, struck, as Fouquet had been, with the generosity of the sum for a soldier's pension, "why, that would be a pension of twenty thousand livres?"

"Exactly, M. Colbert. *Peste!* you reckon like old Pythagoras; yes, twenty thousand livres."

"Ten times the appointment of an intendant of the finances. I beg to offer you my compliments," said Colbert, with a vicious smile.

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, "the king apologized for giving me so little; but he promised to make it more hereafter, when he should be rich; but I must be gone, having much to do——"

"So, then, notwithstanding the expectation of the king, the superintendent paid you, did he?"

"In the same manner as, in opposition to the king's expectation, you refused to pay me."

"I did not refuse, monsieur, I only begged you to wait. And you say that M. Fouquet paid you your five thousand livres?"

"Yes, as *you* might have done; but he did even better than that, M. Colbert."

"And what did he do?"

"He politely counted me down the sum-total, saying, that for the king, his coffers were always full."

"The sum-total! M. Fouquet has given you twenty thousand livres instead of five thousand?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And what for?"

"In order to spare me three visits to the money-chest of the superintendent, so that I have the twenty thousand livres in my pocket in good new coin. You see, then, that I am able to go away without standing in need of you, having come here only for form's sake." And D'Artagnan slapped his hand upon his pocket, with a laugh which disclosed to Colbert thirty-two magnificent teeth, as white as teeth of twenty-five years old, and which seemed to say in their language: "Serve up to us thirty-two little Colberts, and we will chew them willingly." The serpent is as brave as the lion, the hawk as courageous as the eagle, that cannot be contested. It can only be said of animals that are decidedly cowardly, and are so called, that they will be brave only when they have to defend themselves. Colbert was not frightened at the thirty-two teeth of D'Artagnan. He recovered, and suddenly,—
"Monsieur," said he, "monsieur le surintendant has done what he had no right to do."

"What do you mean by that?" replied D'Artagnan.

"I mean that your note—will you let me see your note, if you please?"

"Very willingly; here it is."

Colbert seized the paper with an eagerness which the musketeer did not remark without uneasiness, and particularly without a certain degree of regret at having trusted him with it. "Well, monsieur, the royal order says this:—'At sight, I command that there be paid to M. d'Artagnan the sum of five thousand livres, forming a quarter of the pension I have made him.'"

"So, in fact, it is written," said D'Artagnan, affecting calmness.

"Very well; the king only owed you five thousand livres; why has more been given to you?"

"Because there was more; and M. Fouquet was willing to give me more; that does not concern anybody."

"It is natural," said Colbert, with a proud ease, "that you should be ignorant of the usages of state-finance; but, monsieur, when you have a thousand livres to pay, what do you do?"

"I never have a thousand livres to pay," replied D'Artagnan.

"Once more," said Colbert, irritated—"once more, if you had any sum to pay, would you not pay what you ought?"

"That only proves one thing," said D'Artagnan; "and that is, that you have your particular customs in finance, and M. Fouquet has his own."

"Mine, monsieur, are the correct ones."

"I do not say they are not."

"And you have accepted what was not due to you."

D'Artagnan's eyes flashed. "What is not due to me yet, you meant to say, M. Colbert; for if I had received what was not due to me at all, I should have committed a theft."

Colbert made no reply to this subtlety. "You then owe fifteen thousand livres to the public chest," said he, carried away by his jealous ardor.

"Then you must give me credit for them," replied D'Artagnan, with his imperceptible irony.

"Not at all, monsieur."

"Well! what will you do, then? You will not take my *rouleaux* from me, will you?"

"You must return them to my chest."

"I! Oh! Monsieur Colbert, don't reckon upon that."

"The king wants his money, monsieur."

"And I, monsieur, I want the king's money."

"That may be; but you must return this."

"Not a sou. I have always understood that in matters of *comptabilité*, as you call it, a good cashier never gives back or takes back."

"Then, monsieur, we shall see what the king will say about it. I will show him this note, which proves that M. Fouquet not only pays what he does not owe, but that he does not even take care of vouchers for the sums that he has paid."

"Ah! now I understand why you have taken that paper, M. Colbert!"

Colbert did not perceive all that there was of a threatening character in his name pronounced in a certain manner. "You shall see hereafter what use I will make of it," said he, holding up the paper in his fingers.

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, snatching the paper from him with a rapid movement; "I understand it perfectly well, M. Colbert; I have no occasion to wait for that." And he crumpled up in his pocket the paper he had so cleverly seized.

"Monsieur, monsieur!" cried Colbert, "this is violence!"

"Nonsense! You must not be particular about a soldier's manners!" replied D'Artagnan. "I kiss your hands, my dear M. Colbert." And he went out, laughing in the face of the future minister.

"That man, now," muttered he, "was about to grow quite friendly; it is a great pity I was obliged to cut his company so soon."

CHAPTER IX.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE HEART AND MIND.

For a man who had seen so many much more dangerous ones, the position of D'Artagnan with respect to M. Colbert was only comic. D'Artagnan, therefore, did not

deny himself the satisfaction of laughing at the expense of monsieur l'intendant, from the Rue des Petits-Champs to the Rue des Lombards. It was a great while since D'Artagnan had laughed so long together. He was still laughing when Planchet appeared, laughing likewise, at the door of his house; for Planchet, since the return of his patron, since the entrance of the English guineas, passed the greater part of his life in doing what D'Artagnan had only done from Rue-Neuve des Petits-Champs to the Rue des Lombards.

"You are home, then, my dear master?" said Planchet.

"No, my friend," replied the musketeer; "I am off, and that quickly. I will sup with you, go to bed, sleep five hours, and at break of day leap into my saddle. Has my horse had an extra feed?"

"Eh! my dear master," replied Planchet, "you know very well that your horse is the jewel of the family; that my lads are caressing it all day, and cramming it with sugar, nuts, and biscuits. You ask me if he has had an extra feed of oats; you should ask if he has not had enough to burst him."

"Very well, Planchet, that is all right. Now, then, I pass to what concerns me—my supper?"

"Ready. A smoking roast joint, white wine, crayfish, and fresh-gathered cherries. All ready, my master."

"You are a capital fellow, Planchet; come on, then, let us sup, and I will go to bed."

During supper D'Artagnan observed that Planchet kept rubbing his forehead, as if to facilitate the issue of some idea closely pent within his brain. He looked with an air of kindness at this worthy companion of former adventures and misadventures, and, clinking glass against glass, "Come, Planchet," said he, "let us see what it is that gives you so much trouble to bring forth. *Mordieu!* speak freely, and quickly."

"Well, this is it," replied Planchet: "you appear to me to be going on some expedition or other."

"I don't say that I am not."

"Then you have some new idea?"

"That is possible, too, Planchet."

"Then there will be fresh capital to be ventured? I will lay down fifty thousand livres upon the idea you are about to carry out." And so saying, Planchet rubbed his hands one against the other with a rapidity evincing great delight.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, "there is but one misfortune in it."

"And what is that?"

"That the idea is not mine. I can risk nothing upon it."

These words drew a deep sigh from the heart of Planchet. That Avarice is an ardent counselor; she carries away her man, as Satan did Jesus, to the mountain, and when once she has shown to an unfortunate all the kingdoms of the earth, she is able to repose herself, knowing full well that she has left her companion Envy to gnaw his heart. Planchet had tasted of riches easily acquired, and was never afterwards likely to stop in his desires; but as he had a good heart in spite of his covetousness, as he adored D'Artagnan, he could not refrain from making him a thousand recommendations, each more affectionate than the others. He would not have been sorry, nevertheless, to have caught a little hint of the secret his master concealed so well; tricks, turns, counsels and traps were all useless, D'Artagnan let nothing confidential escape him. The evening passed thus. After supper the portmanteau occupied D'Artagnan, he took a turn to the stable, patted his horse, and examined his shoes and legs; then, having counted over his money, he went to bed, sleeping as if only twenty, because he had

neither inquietude nor remorse; he closed his eyes five minutes after he had blown out his lamp. Many events might, however, have kept him awake. Thought boiled in his brain, conjectures abounded, and D'Artagnan was a great drawer of horoscopes; but, with that imperturbable phlegm which does more than genius for the fortune and happiness of men of action, he put off reflection till the next day, for fear, he said, not to be fresh when he wanted to be so.

The day came. The Rue des Lombards had its share of the caresses of Aurora with the rosy fingers, and D'Artagnan arose like Aurora. He did not awaken anybody, he placed his portmanteau under his arm, descended the stairs without making one of them creak, and without disturbing one of the sonorous snorings in every story from the garret to the cellar, then, having saddled his horse, shut the stable and house doors, he set off, at a foot-pace, on his expedition to Bretagne. He had done quite right not to trouble himself with all the political and diplomatic affairs which solicited his attention; for, in the morning, in freshness and mild twilight, his ideas developed themselves in purity and abundance. In the first place, he passed before the house Fouquet, and threw in a large gaping box the fortunate order which, the evening before, he had had so much trouble to recover from the hooked fingers of the intendant. Placed in an envelope, and addressed to Fouquet, it had not even been divined by Planchet, who in divination was equal to Calchas or the Pythian Apollo. D'Artagnan thus sent back the order to Fouquet, without compromising himself, and without having thenceforward any reproaches to make himself. When he had effected this proper restitution, "Now," said he to himself, "let us inhale much maternal air, much freedom from cares, much health, let us allow the horse Zephyr, whose flanks puff as if he had to respire an atmosphere, to

breathe, and let us be very ingenious in our little calculations. It is time," said D'Artagnan, "to form a plan of the campaign, and, according to the method of M. Turenne, who has a large head full of all sorts of good counsels, before the plan of the campaign it is advisable to draw a striking portrait of the generals to whom we are opposed. In the first place, M. Fouquet presents himself. What is M. Fouquet?—M. Fouquet," replied D'Artagnan to himself "is a handsome man very much beloved by the women, a generous man very much beloved by the poets; a man of wit, much execrated by pretenders. Well, now I am neither woman, poet, nor pretender: I neither love nor hate monsieur le surintendant. I find myself, therefore, in the same position in which M. de Turenne found himself when opposed to the Prince de Condé at Jargeau, Gien and the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. He did not execrate monsieur le prince, it is true, but he obeyed the king. Monsieur le prince is an agreeable man, but the king is king. Turenne heaved a deep sigh, called Condé 'My cousin,' and swept away his army. Now what does the king wish?—That does not concern me. Now, what does M. Colbert wish?—Oh, that's another thing. M. Colbert wishes all that M. Fouquet does not wish. Then what does M. Fouquet wish?—Oh, that is serious.—M. Fouquet wishes precisely for all which the king wishes."

This monologue ended, D'Artagnan began to laugh, whilst making his whip whistle in the air. He was already on the high road, frightening the birds in the hedges, listening to the livres chinking and dancing in his leather pocket, at every step; and, let us confess it, every time that D'Artagnan found himself in such conditions, tenderness was not his dominant vice. "Come," said he, "I cannot think the expedition a very dangerous one; and it will fall out with my voyage as with that piece M. Monk took me to see in London, which was called, I think, 'Much Ado about Nothing.'"

CHAPTER X.

THE JOURNEY.

It was perhaps the fiftieth time since the day on which we open this history, that this man, with a heart of bronze and muscles of steel, had left house and friends, everything, in short, to go in search of fortune and death. The one—that is to say, death—had constantly retreated before him, as if afraid of him; the other—that is to say, fortune—for a month past only had really made an alliance with him. Although he was not a great philosopher, after the fashion of either Epicurus or Socrates, he was a powerful spirit, having knowledge of life, and endowed with thought. No one is as brave, as adventurous, or as skillful as D'Artagnan, without being at the same time inclined to be a *dreamer*. He had picked up, here and there, some scraps of M. de la Rochefoucault, worthy of being translated into Latin by MM. de Port Royal; and he had made a collection, *en passant*, in the society of Athos and Aramis, of many morsels of Seneca and Cicero, translated by them, and applied to the uses of common life. That contempt of riches which our Gascon had observed as an article of faith during the thirty-five first years of his life, had for a long time been considered by him as the first article of the code of bravery. "Article first," said he, "A man is brave because he has nothing. A man has nothing because he despises riches." Therefore, with these principles, which, as we have said, had regulated the thirty-five first years of his life, D'Artagnan was no sooner possessed of riches, than he felt it necessary to ask himself if, in spite of his

riches, he were still brave. To this, for any other but D'Artagnan, the events of the Place de Grève might have served as a reply. Many consciences would have been satisfied with them, but D'Artagnan was brave enough to ask himself sincerely and conscientiously if he were brave. Therefore to this :—

“But it appears to me that I drew promptly enough, and cut and thrust pretty freely on the Place de Grève, to be satisfied of my bravery,” D'Artagnan had himself replied. “Gently, captain, that is not an answer. I was brave that day, because they were burning my house, and there are a hundred, and even a thousand, to speak against one, that if those gentlemen of the riots had not formed that unlucky idea, their plan of attack would have succeeded, or, at least, it would not have been I who would have opposed myself to it. Now, what will be brought against me? I have no house to be burnt in Bretagne; I have no treasure there that can be taken from me.—No; but I have my skin; that precious skin of M. d'Artagnan, which to him is worth more than all the houses and all the treasures of the world. That skin to which I cling above everything, because it is, everything considered, the binding of a body which incloses a heart very warm and ready to fight, and, consequently, to live. Then, I do desire to live: and, in reality, I live much better, more completely, since I have become rich. Who the devil ever said that money spoiled life! Upon my soul, it is no such thing, on the contrary, it seems as if I absorbed a double quantity of air and sun. *Mordieux*, what will it be then, if I double that fortune; and if, instead of the switch I now hold in my hand, I should ever carry the bâton of a maréchal? Then I really don't know if there will be, from that moment, enough of air and sun for me. In fact, this is not a dream, who the devil would oppose it, if the king made me a maréchal, as his father, King Louis XIII., made a duke and constable

of Albert de Luynes? Am I not as brave, and much more intelligent, than that imbecile de Vitry? Ah! that's exactly what will prevent my advancement: I have too much wit. Luckily, if there is any justice in this world, fortune owes me many compensations. She owes me certainly, a recompense for all I did for Anne of Austria, and an indemnification for all she has not done for me. Then, at the present, I am very well with a king, and with a king who has the appearance of determining to reign. May God keep him in that illustrious road! For, if he is resolved to reign, he will want me; and if he wants me, he will give me what he has promised me—warmth and light; so that I march, comparatively, now, as I marched formerly,—from nothing to everything. Only the nothing of to-day is the all of former days; there has only this little change taken place in my life. And now let us see! let us take the part of the heart, as I just now was speaking of it. But in truth, I only spoke of it from memory.” And the Gascon applied his hand to his breast, as if he were actually seeking the place where his heart was.

“Ah! wretch!” murmured he, smiling with bitterness. “Ah! poor mortal species! You hoped, for an instant, that you had not a heart, and now you find you have one—bad courtier as thou art,—and even one of the most seditious. You have a heart which speaks to you in favor of M. Fouquet. And what is M. Fouquet, when the king is in question?—A conspirator, a real conspirator, who did not even give himself the trouble to conceal his being a conspirator; therefore, what a weapon would you not have against him, if his good grace, and his intelligence had not made a scabbard for that weapon. An armed revolt!—for, in fact, M. Fouquet has been guilty of an armed revolt. Thus, while the king vaguely suspects M. Fouquet of rebellion, I know it—I could prove that M. Fouquet had caused the shedding of the blood of his majesty's

subjects. Now, then, let us see? Knowing all that, and holding my tongue, what further would this heart wish in return for a kind action of M. Fouquet's, for an advance of fifteen thousand livres, for a diamond worth a thousand pistoles, for a smile in which there was as much bitterness as kindness?—I save his life."

"Now, then, I hope," continued the musketeer, "that this imbecile of a heart is going to preserve silence, and so be fairly quits with M. Fouquet. Now, then, the king becomes my sun, and as my heart is quits with M. Fouquet, let him beware who places himself between me and my sun! Forward, for his majesty Louis XIV.!—Forward!"

These reflections were the only impediments which were able to retard the progress of D'Artagnan. These reflections once made, he increased the speed of his horse. But, however perfect his horse Zephyr might be, it could not hold out at such a pace forever. The day after his departure from Paris, he was left at Chartres, at the house of an old friend D'Artagnan had met with in an *hôtelier* of that city. From that moment, the musketeer traveled on post-horses. Thanks to this mode of locomotion, he traversed the space separating Chartres from Châteaubriand. In the last of these two cities, far enough from the coast to prevent any one guessing that D'Artagnan wished to reach the sea—far enough from Paris to prevent all suspicion of his being a messenger from Louis XIV., whom D'Artagnan had called his sun, without suspecting that he who was only at present a rather poor star in the heaven of royalty, would, one day, make ~~that~~ star his emblem; the messenger of Louis XIV., we say, quitted the post and purchased a *bidet* of the meanest appearance,—one of those animals which an officer of cavalry would never choose, for fear of being disgraced. Excepting the color; this new acquisition recalled to the mind of

D'Artagnan the famous orange-colored horse with which, or rather upon which, he had made his first appearance in the world. Truth to say, from the moment he crossed this new steed, it was no longer D'Artagnan who was traveling,—it was a good man clothed in an iron-gray *justaucorps*, brown *haut-de-chausses*, holding the medium between a priest and a layman; that which brought him nearest to the churchman was, that D'Artagnan had placed on his head a *calotte* of threadbare velvet, and over the *calotte*, a large black hat; no more sword, a stick, hung by a cord to his wrist, but to which, he promised himself, as an unexpected auxiliary, to join, upon occasion, a good dagger, ten inches long, concealed under his cloak. The *bidet* purchased at Châteaubriand completed the metamorphosis; it was called, or rather D'Artagnan called it, Furet (ferret).

“If I have changed Zephyr into Furet,” said D'Artagnan, “I must make some diminutive or other of my own name. So, instead of D'Artagnan, I will be Agnan, short; that is a concession which I naturally owe to my gray coat, my round hat, and my rusty *calotte*.”

Monsieur d'Artagnan traveled, then, pretty easily upon Furet, who ambled like a true butter-woman's pad, and who, with his amble, managed cheerfully about twelve leagues a day, upon four spindle-shanks, of which the practiced eye of D'Artagnan had appreciated the strength and safety beneath the thick mass of hair which covered them. Jogging along, the traveler took notes, studied the country, which he traversed reserved and silent, ever seeking the most plausible pretext for reaching Belle-Isle-en-Mer, and for seeing everything without arousing suspicion. In this manner, he was enabled to convince himself of the importance the event assumed in proportion as he drew near to it. In this remote country, in this ancient duchy of Bretagne, which was not France at

that period, and is not so even now, the people knew nothing of the king of France. They not only did not know him, but were unwilling to know him. One face—a single one—floated visibly for them upon the political current. Their ancient dukes no longer ruled them; government was a void—nothing more. In place of the sovereign duke, the seigneurs of parishes reigned without control; and, above these seigneurs, God, who has never been forgotten in Bretagne. Among these suzerains of châteaux and belfries, the most powerful, the richest, and the most popular, was M. Fouquet, seigneur of Belle-Isle. Even in the country, even within sight of that mysterious isle, legends and traditions consecrate its wonders. Every one might not penetrate it: the isle, of an extent of six leagues in length, and six in breadth, was a seignorial property, which the people had for a long time respected, covered as it was with the name of Retz, so redoubtable in the country. Shortly after the erection of this seigniory into a marquisate, Belle-Isle passed to M. Fouquet. The celebrity of the isle did not date from yesterday; its name, or rather its qualification, is traced back to the remotest antiquity. The ancients called it Kalonèse, from two Greek words, signifying beautiful isle. Thus, at a distance of eighteen hundred years, it had borne, in another idiom, the same name it still bears. There was, then, something in itself in this property of M. Fouquet's, besides its position of six leagues off the coast of France; a position which makes it a sovereign in its maritime solitude, like a majestic ship which disdains roads, and proudly casts anchor in mid-ocean.

D'Artagnan learnt all this without appearing the least in the world astonished. He also learnt that the best way to get intelligence was to go to La Roche-Bernard, a tolerably important city at the mouth of the Vilaine. Perhaps there he could embark; if not, crossing the salt

marshes, he would repair to Guérande-en-Croisic, to wait for an opportunity to cross over to Belle-Isle. He had discovered, besides, since his departure from Châteaubriand, that nothing would be impossible for Furet under the impulsion of M. Agnan, and nothing to M. Agnan through the initiative of Furet. He prepared, then, to sup off a teal and a *tourteau*, in a hotel of La Roche-Bernard, and ordered to be brought from the cellar, to wash down these two Breton dishes, some cider, which, the moment it touched his lips, he perceived to be more Breton still.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH A POET, WHO HAD TURNED PRINTER FOR THE SAKE OF PRINTING HIS OWN VERSES.

BEFORE taking his place at table, D'Artagnan acquired, as was his custom, all the information he could; but it is an axiom of curiosity, that every man who wishes to question well and fruitfully ought in the first place to lay himself open to questions. D'Artagnan sought, then, with his usual skill, a promising questioner in the hostelry of La Roche-Bernard. At the moment, there were in the house, on the first story, two travelers either preparing for supper, or at supper itself. D'Artagnan had seen their nags in the stable, and their equipages in the *salle*. One traveled with a lackey, undoubtedly a person of consideration;—two Perche mares, sleek, sound beasts, were suitable means of locomotion. The other, a little fellow, a traveler of meagre appearance, wearing a dusty surtout, dirty linen, and boots more worn by the pavement than the stirrup, had come from Nantes with a cart

drawn by a horse so like Furet in color, that D'Artagnan might have gone a hundred miles without finding a better match. This cart contained divers large packets wrapped in pieces of old stuff.

"That traveler yonder," said D'Artagnan to himself, "is the man for my money. He will do, he suits me; I ought to do for and suit him; M. Agnan, with the gray doublet and the rusty *calotte*, is not unworthy of supping with the gentleman of the old boots and still older horse."

This said, D'Artagnan called the host, and desired him to send his teal, *tourteau*, and cider up to the chamber of the gentleman of modest exterior. He himself climbed, a plate in his hand, the wooden staircase which led to the chamber, and began to knock at the door.

"Come in!" said the unknown. D'Artagnan entered, with a simper on his lips, his plate under his arm, his hat in one hand, his candle in the other.

"Excuse me, monsieur," said he, "I am, as you are, a traveler; I know no one in the hotel, and I have the bad habit of losing my spirits when I eat alone; so that my repast appears a bad one to me, and does not nourish me. Your face, which I saw just now, when you came down to have some oysters opened,—your face pleased me much. Besides, I have observed you have a horse just like mine, and that the host, no doubt on account of that resemblance, has placed them side by side in the stable, where they appear to agree amazingly well together. I therefore, monsieur, do not see any reason why the masters should be separated when the horses are united. Accordingly, I am come to request the pleasure of being admitted to your table. My name is Agnan, at your service, monsieur, the unworthy steward of a rich seigneur, who wishes to purchase some salt-mines in this country, and sends me to examine his future acquisitions. In truth, monsieur, I should be well pleased if my counte-

nance were as agreeable to you as yours is to me; for, upon my honor, I am quite at your service."

The stranger, whom D'Artagnan saw for the first time,—for before he had only caught a glimpse of him,—the stranger had black and brilliant eyes, a yellow complexion, a brow a little wrinkled by the weight of fifty years, *bonhomie* in his features collectively, but some cunning in his look.

"One would say," thought D'Artagnan, "that this merry fellow has never exercised more than the upper part of his head, his eyes, and his brain. He must be a man of science: his mouth, nose, and chin signify absolutely nothing."

"Monsieur," replied the latter, with whose mind and person we have been making so free, "you do me much honor; not that I am ever *ennuyé*, for I have," added he, smiling, "a company which amuses me always; but, never mind that, I am very happy to receive you." But when saying this, the man with the worn boots cast an uneasy look at his table, from which the oysters had disappeared, and upon which there was nothing left but a morsel of salt bacon.

"Monsieur," D'Artagnan hastened to say, "the host is bringing me up a pretty piece of roasted poultry and a superb *tourteau*." D'Artagnan had read in the look of his companion, however rapid it disappeared, the fear of an attack by a parasite: he divined justly. At this opening, the features of the man of modest exterior relaxed; and, as if he had watched the moment for his entrance, as D'Artagnan spoke, the host appeared, bearing the announced dishes. The *tourteau* and the teal were added to the morsel of broiled bacon; D'Artagnan and his guest bowed, sat down opposite to each other, and, like two brothers, shared the bacon and the other dishes.

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "you must confess that association is a wonderful thing."

"How so?" replied the stranger, with his mouth full.

"Well, I will tell you," replied D'Artagnan.

The stranger gave a short truce to the movement of his jaws, in order to hear the better.

"In the first place," continued D'Artagnan, "instead of one candle, which each of us had, we have two."

"That is true!" said the stranger, struck with the extreme lucidity of the observation.

"Then I see that you eat my *tourteau* in preference, whilst I, in preference, eat your bacon."

"That is true again."

"And then, in addition to being better lighted and eating what we prefer, I place the pleasure of your company."

"Truly, monsieur, you are very jovial," said the unknown, cheerfully.

"Yes, monsieur; jovial, as all people are who carry nothing on their minds, or, for that matter in their heads. Oh! I can see it is quite another sort of thing with you," continued D'Artagnan; "I can read in your eyes all sorts of genius."

"Oh, monsieur!"

"Come, confess one thing."

"What is that?"

"That you are a learned man."

"*Ma foi!* monsieur."

"*Hein?*"

"Almost."

"Come, then!"

"I am an author."

"There!" cried D'Artagnan, clapping his hands, "I knew I could not be deceived! It is a miracle!"

"Monsieur——"

"What! shall I have the honor of passing the evening in the society of an author, of a celebrated author, perhaps?"

"Oh!" said the unknown, blushing, "celebrated, monsieur, celebrated is not the word."

"Modest!" cried D'Artagnan, transported, "he is modest!" Then, turning towards the stranger, with a character of blunt *bonhomie*: "But tell me at least the name of your works, monsieur; for you will please to observe you have not told me your name, and I have been forced to divine your genius."

"My name is Jupenet, monsieur," said the author.

"A fine name! a grand name! upon my honor; and I do not know why—pardon me the mistake, if it be one—but surely I have heard that name somewhere."

"I have made verses," said the poet, modestly.

"Ah! that is it, then; I have heard them read."

"A tragedy."

"I must have seen it played."

The poet blushed again, and said: "I do not think that can be the case, for my verses have never been printed."

"Well, then, it must have been the tragedy which informed me of your name."

"You are again mistaken, for MM. the comedians of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, would have nothing to do with it," said the poet, with a smile, the receipt for which certain sorts of pride alone know the secret. D'Artagnan bit his lips. "Thus, then, you see, monsieur," continued the poet, "you are in error on my account, and that not being at all known to you, you have never heard tell of me."

"Ah! that confounds me. That name, Jupenet, appears to me, nevertheless, a fine name, and quite as worthy of being known as those of MM. Corneille, or Rotrou, or Garnier. I hope, monsieur, you will have the

goodness to repeat to me a part of your tragedy presently, by way of dessert, for instance. That will be sugared roast meat,—*mordieux!* Ah! pardon me, monsieur, that was a little oath which escaped me, because it is a habit with my lord and master. I sometimes allow myself to usurp that little oath, as it seems in pretty good taste. I take this liberty only in his absence, please to observe, for you may understand that in his presence—but, in truth, monsieur, this cider is abominable; do you not think so? And besides, the pot is of such an irregular shape it will not stand on the table.”

“Suppose we were to make it level?”

“To be sure; but with what?”

“With this knife.”

“And the teal, with what shall we cut that up? . Do you not, by chance, mean to touch the teal?”

“Certainly.”

“Well, then——”

“Wait.”

And the poet rummaged in his pocket, and drew out a piece of brass, oblong, quadrangular, about a line in thickness, and an inch and a half in length. But scarcely had this little piece of brass seen the light, than the poet appeared to have committed an imprudence, and made a movement to put it back again in his pocket. D'Artagnan perceived this, for he was a man that nothing escaped. He stretched forth his hand towards the piece of brass: “Humph! that which you hold in your hand is pretty; will you allow me to look at it?”

“Certainly,” said the poet, who appeared to have yielded too soon to a first impulse. “Certainly, you may look at it: but it will be in vain for you to look at it,” added he, with a satisfied air; “if I were not, to tell you its use, you would never guess it.”

D'Artagnan had seized as an avowal the hesitation of the poet, and his eagerness to conceal the piece of brass which a first movement had induced him to take out of his pocket. His attention, therefore once awakened on this point, he surrounded himself with a circumspection which gave him a superiority on all occasions. Besides, whatever M. Jupenet might say about it, by a simple inspection of the object, he perfectly well knew what it was. It was a character in printing.

"Can you guess, now, what this is?" continued the poet.

"No," said D'Artagnan, "no, *ma foi!*"

"Well, monsieur," said M. Jupenet, "this little piece of metal is a printing letter."

"Bah!"

"A capital."

"Stop, stop, stop," said D'Artagnan, opening his eyes very innocently.

"Yes, monsieur, a capital; the first letter of my name."

"And this is a letter, is it?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, I will confess one thing to you."

"And what is that?"

"No, I will not, I was going to say something stupid."

"No, no," said Master Jupenet, with a patronizing air.

"Well, then, I cannot comprehend, if that is a letter, how you can make a word."

"A word?"

"Yes, a printed word."

"Oh, that's very easy."

"Let me see."

"Does it interest you?"

"Enormously."

"Well, I will explain the thing to you. Attend."

"I am attending."

"That is it."

"Good."

"Look attentively."

"I am looking." D'Artagnan, in fact, appeared absorbed in observations. Jupenet drew from his pocket seven or eight other pieces of brass smaller than the first.

"Ah, ah," said D'Artagnan.

"What!"

"You have, then, a whole printing-office in your pocket. *Peste!* that is curious indeed."

"Is it not?"

"Good God, what a number of things we learn by traveling."

"To your health!" said Jupenet, quite enchanted.

"To yours, *mordieux*, to yours. But—an instant—not in this cider. It is an abominable drink, unworthy of a man who quenches his thirst at the Hippocrene fountain—is not it so you call your fountain, you poets?"

"Yes, monsieur, our fountain is so called. That comes from two Greek words—*hippos*, which means a horse, and——"

"Monsieur," interrupted D'Artagnan, "you shall drink of a liquor which comes from one single French word, and is none the worse for that—from the word *grape*; this cider gives me the heartburn. Allow me to inquire of your host if there is not a good bottle of Beaugency, or of the Ceran growth, at the back of the large bins in his cellar."

The host, being sent for, immediately attended.

"Monsieur," interrupted the poet, "take care, we shall not have time to drink the wine, unless we make great haste, for I must take advantage of the tide to secure the boat."

"What boat?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Why the boat which sets out for Belle-Isle!"

"Ah—for Belle-Isle," said the musketeer, "that is good."

"Bah! you will have plenty of time, monsieur," replied the *hôte*, uncorking the bottle, "the boat will not leave this hour."

"But who will give me notice?" said the poet.

"Your fellow-traveler," replied the host.

"But I scarcely know him."

"When you hear him departing, it will be time for you to go."

"Is he going to Belle-Isle, likewise, then?"

"Yes."

"The traveler who has a lackey?" asked D'Artagnan.

"He is some gentleman, no doubt?"

"I know nothing of him."

"What!—know nothing of him?"

"No, all I know is, that he is drinking the same wine as you."

"*Peste!*—that is a great honor for us," said D'Artagnan, filling his companion's glass whilst the host went out.

"So," resumed the poet, returning to his dominant ideas, "you never saw any printing done?"

"Never."

"Well, then, take the letters thus, which compose the word, you see: A B; *ma foi!* here is an R, two E E, then a G." And he assembled the letters with a swiftness and skill which did not escape the eye of D'Artagnan.

"*Abrégé,*" said he, as he ended.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan; "here are plenty of letters got together; but how are they kept so?" And he poured out a second glass for the poet. M. Jupenét smiled like a man who has an answer for everything; then he pulled out—still from his pocket—a little metal ruler, composed of two parts, like a carpenter's rule, against which he put

together, and in a line, the characters, holding them under his left thumb.

"And what do you call that little metal ruler?" said D'Artagnan, "for, I suppose, all these things have names."

"This is called a composing-stick," said Jupenet; "it is by the aid of this stick that the lines are formed."

"Come, then, I was not mistaken in what I said; you have a press in your pocket," said D'Artagnan, laughing with an air of simplicity so stupid, that the poet, was completely his dupe."

"No," replied he; but I am too lazy to write, and when I have a verse in my head, I print it immediately. That is a labor spared."

"*Mordieux!*" thought D'Artagnan to himself, "this must be cleared up." And under a pretext, which did not embarrass the musketeer, who was fertile in expedients, he left the table, went downstairs, ran to the shed under which stood the poet's little cart, poked the point of his poniard into the stuff which enveloped one of the packages, which he found full of types, like those which the poet had in his pocket."

"Humph!" said D'Artagnan, "I do not yet know whether M. Fouquet wishes to fortify Belle-Isle; but, at all events, here are some spiritual munitions for the castle." Then, enchanted with his rich discovery, he ran up-stairs again and resumed his place at the table.

D'Artagnan had learnt what he wished to know. He, however, remained, none the less, face to face with his partner, to the moment when they heard from the next room symptoms of a person's being about to go out. The printer was immediately on foot; he had given orders for his horse to be got ready. His carriage was waiting at the door. The second traveler got into his saddle, in the courtyard, with his lackey. D'Artagnan followed Jupenet to

the door ; he embarked his cart and horse on board the boat. As to the opulent traveler, he did the same with his two horses and servant. But all the wit D'Artagnan employed in endeavoring to find out his name was lost—he could learn nothing. Only he took such notice of his countenance, that it was impressed upon his mind forever. D'Artagnan had a great inclination to embark with the two travelers, but an interest, more powerful than curiosity—that of success—repelled him from the shore, and brought him back again to the hostelry. He entered with a sigh, and went to bed directly in order to be ready early in the morning with fresh ideas and the sage counsel of sufficing sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

D'ARTAGNAN CONTINUES HIS INVESTIGATIONS.

At daybreak D'Artagnan saddled Furet, who had fared sumptuously all night, devouring the remainder of the oats and hay left by her companions. The musketeer sifted all he possibly could out of the host, whom he found cunning, mistrustful, and devoted, body and soul, to M. Fouquet. In order not to awaken the suspicions of this man, he carried on his fable of being a probable purchaser of some salt mines. To have embarked for Belle-Isle at Roche-Bernard, would have been to expose himself still further to comments which had, perhaps, been already made, and would be carried to the castle. Moreover, it was singular that this traveler and his lackey should have remained a mystery to D'Artagnan, in spite of all the questions addressed by him to the host, who appeared to know him perfectly well. The musketeer then made some inquiries concerning the salt-mines, and took the road to

the marshes, leaving the sea on his right, and penetrating into that vast and desolate plain which resembles a sea of mud, of which, here and there, a few crests of salt silver the undulations. Furet walked admirably, with his little nervous legs, along the foot-wide causeways which separate the salt-mines. D'Artagnan, aware of the consequences of a fall, which would result in a cold bath, allowed him to go as he liked, contenting himself with looking at, on the horizon, three rocks, that rose up like lance-blades from the bosom of the plain, destitute of verdure. Pirial, the bourgs of Batz and Le Croisic, exactly resembling each other, attracted and suspended his attention. If the traveler turned round, the better to make his observations, he saw on the other side an horizon of three other steeples, Guérande, Le Poulighen, and Saint-Joachim, which, in their circumference, represented a set of skittles, of which he and Furet were but the wandering ball. Pirial was the first little port on his right. He went thither, with the names of the principal salters on his lips. At the moment he reached the little port of Pirial, five large barges, laden with stone, were leaving it. It appeared strange to D'Artagnan, that stones should be leaving a country where none are found. He had recourse to all the amenity of M. Agnan to learn from the people of the port the cause of this singular arrangement. An old fisherman replied to M. Agnan, that the stones, very certainly did not come from Pirial or the marshes.

"Where do they come from, then?" asked the musketeer.

"Monsieur, they come from Nantes and Painboeuf."

"Where are they going, then?"

"Monsieur, to Belle-Isle."

"Ah! ah!" said D'Artagnan, in the same tone he had assumed to tell the printer that his character interested him; "are they building at Belle-Isle, then?"

"Why, yes, monsieur, M. Fouquet has the walls of the castle repaired every year."

"Is it in ruins, then?"

"It is old."

"Thank you."

"The fact is," said D'Artagnan to himself, "nothing is more natural; every proprietor has a right to repair his own property. It would be like telling me I was fortifying the Image-de-Notre-Dame, when I was simply obliged to make repairs. In good truth, I believe false reports have been made to his majesty, and he is very likely to be in the wrong."

"You must confess," continued he then, aloud, and addressing the fisherman—for his part of a suspicious man was imposed upon him by the object even of his mission—"you must confess, my dear monsieur, that these stones travel in a very curious fashion."

"How so?" said the fisherman.

"They come from Nantes or Painbœuf by the Loire, do they not?"

"With the tide."

"That is convenient,—I don't say it is not; but why do they not go straight from Saint-Nazaire to Belle-Isle?"

"Eh! because the *chalands* (barges) are fresh-water boats, and take the sea badly," replied the fisherman.

"That is not sufficient reason."

"Pardon me, monsieur, one may see that you have never been a sailor," added the fisherman, not without a sort of disdain.

"Explain that to me, if you please, my good man. It appears to me that to come from Painbœuf to Pirial, and go from Pirial to Belle-Isle, is as if we went from Roche-Bernard to Nantes, and from Nantes to Pirial."

"By water that would be the nearest way," replied the fisherman, imperturbably.

"But there is an elbow?"

The fisherman shook his head.

"The shortest road from one place to another is a straight line," continued D'Artagnan.

"You forget the tide, monsieur."

"Well! take the tide."

"And the wind."

"Well, and the wind."

"Without doubt; the current of the Loire carries barks almost as far as Croisic. If they want to lie by a little, or to refresh the crew, they come to Pirial along the coast; from Pirial they find another inverse current, which carries them to the Isle-Dumal, two leagues and a half."

"Granted."

"There the current of the Vilaine throws them upon another isle, the isle of Hoedic."

"I agree with that."

"Well, monsieur, from that isle to Belle-Isle the way is quite straight. The sea, broken both above and below, passes like a canal—like a mirror between the two isles; the *chalands* glide along upon it like ducks upon the Loire; that's how it is."

"It does not signify," said the obstinate M. Agnan; "it is a long way round."

"Ah! yes; but M. Fouquet will have it so," replied, as conclusive, the fisherman, taking off his woolen cap at the enunciation of that respected name.

A look from D'Artagnan, a look as keen and piercing as a sword-blade, found nothing in the heart of the old man but simple confidence—on his features, nothing but satisfaction and indifference. He said, "M. Fouquet will have it so," as he would have said, "God has willed it."

D'Artagnan had already advanced too far in this direction; besides, the *chalands* being gone, there remained nothing at Pirial but a single bark—that of the old man,

and it did not look fit for sea without great preparation. D'Artagnan therefore patted Furet, who, as a new proof of his charming character, resumed his march with his feet in the salt mines, and his nose to the dry wind, which bends the furze and the broom of this country. They reached Croisic about five o'clock.

If D'Artagnan had been a poet, it was a beautiful spectacle: the immense strand of a league or more, the sea covers at high tide, and which, at the reflux, appears gray and desolate, strewed with polypi and seaweed, with pebbles sparse and white, like bones in some vast old cemetery. But the soldier, the politician, and the ambitious man, had no longer the sweet consolation of looking towards heaven, to read there a hope or a warning. A red sky signifies nothing to such people but wind and disturbance. White and fleecy clouds upon the azure only say that the sea will be smooth and peaceful. D'Artagnan found the sky blue, the breeze embalmed with saline perfumes, and he said: "I will embark with the first tide, if it be but in a nutshell."

At Croisic as at Pirial, he had remarked enormous heaps of stone lying along the shore. These gigantic walls; diminished every tide by the barges for Belle-Isle, were, in the eyes of the musketeer, the consequence and the proof of what he had well divined at Pirial. Was it a wall that M. Fouquet was constructing? was it a fortification that he was erecting? To ascertain that, he must make fuller observations. D'Artagnan put Furet into a stable; supped, went to bed, and on the morrow took a walk upon the port or rather upon the shingle. De Croisic has a port of fifty feet; it has a look-out which resembles an enormous *brioche* (a kind of cake) elevated on a dish. The flat strand is the dish. Hundreds of barrowsful of earth amalgamated with pebbles, and rounded into cones, with sinuous passages between, are look-outs and *briches* at the same time. It

is so now, and it was so two hundred years ago, only the *brioche* was not so large, and probably there were to be seen no trellises of lath around the *brioche*, which constitute an ornament, planted like *gardes-fous* along the passages that wind towards the little terrace. Upon the shingle lounged three or four fishermen talking about sardines and shrimps. D'Artagnan, with his eyes animated by rough gayety, and a smile upon his lips, approached these fishermen.

"Any fishing going on to day?" said he.

"Yes, monsieur," replied one of them, "we are only waiting for the tide."

"Where do you fish, my friends?"

"Upon the coasts, monsieur."

"Which are the best coasts?"

"Ah, that is all according. The tour of the isles, for example."

"Yes, but they are a long way off, those isles, are they not?"

"Not very; four leagues."

"Four leagues! That is a voyage."

The fishermen laughed in M. Agnan's face.

"Hear me, then," said the latter, with an air of simple stupidity; "four leagues off you lose sight of land, do you not?"

"Why, not always."

"Ah, it is a long way—too long, or else I would have asked you to take me aboard, and to show me what I have never seen."

"What is that?"

"A live sea-fish."

"Monsieur comes from the province?" said a fisherman.

"Yes, I come from Paris."

The Breton shrugged his shoulders; then:

"Have you ever seen M. Fouquet in Paris?" asked he.

"Often," replied D'Artagnan.

"Often!" repeated the fishermen, closing their circle round the Parisian. "Do you know him?"

"A little; he is the intimate friend of my master."

"Ah!" said the fisherman, in astonishment.

"And," said D'Artagnan, "I have seen all his châteaux of Saint Mandé, of Vaux, and his hotel in Paris."

"Is that a fine place?"

"Superb."

"It is not so fine a place as Belle-Isle," said the fisherman.

"Bah!" cried M. d'Artagnan, breaking into a laugh so loud that he angered all his auditors.

"It is very plain you have never seen Belle-Isle," said the most curious of the fishermen. "Do you know that there are six leagues of it; and that there are such trees on it as cannot be equalled even at Nantes-sur-le-Fossé?"

"Trees in the sea!" cried D'Artagnan; "well, I should like to see them."

"That can be easily done; we are fishing at the Isle de Hoedic—come with us. From that place you will see, as a Paradise, the black trees of Belle-Isle against the sky; you will see the white line of the castle, which cuts the horizon of the sea like a blade."

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "that must be very beautiful. But do you know there are a hundred belfries at M. Fouquet's château of Vaux?"

The Breton raised his head in profound admiration, but he was not convinced. "A hundred belfries! Ah, that may be; but Belle-Isle is finer than that. Should you like to see Belle-Isle?"

"Is that possible?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes, with permission of the governor."

"But I do not know the governor."

"As you know M. Fouquet, you can tell your name."

"Oh, my friends, I am not a gentleman."

"Everybody enters Belle-Isle," continued the fisherman in his strong, pure language, "provided he means no harm to Belle-Isle or its master."

A slight shudder crept over the body of the musketeer. "That is true," thought he. Then, recovering himself, "If I were sure," said he, "not to be sea-sick."

"What upon *her*?" said the fisherman, pointing with pride to his pretty round-bottomed bark."

"Well, you almost persuade me," cried M. Agnan; "I will go and see Belle-Isle, but they will not admit me."

"We shall enter, safe enough."

"You! What for?"

"Why, *dame!* to sell fish to the corsairs."

"Ha! Corsairs—what do you mean?"

"Well, I mean that M. Fouquet is having two corsairs built to chase the Dutch and the English, and we sell our fish to the crews of those little vessels."

"Come, come!" said D'Artagnan to himself—"better and better. A printing-press, bastions, and corsairs! Well, M. Fouquet is not an enemy to be despised, as I presumed to fancy. He is worth the trouble of travelling to see him nearer."

"We set out at half-past five," said the fisherman gravely.

"I am quite ready, and I will not leave you now." So D'Artagnan saw the fishermen haul their barks to meet the tide with a windlass. The sea rose; M. Agnan allowed himself to be hoisted on board, not without sporting a little fear and awkwardness, to the amusement of the young beach-urchins who watched him with their large intelligent eyes. He laid himself down upon a folded sail, not interfering with anything whilst the bark prepared for sea; and, with its large square sail, it

was fairly out within two hours. The fishermen, who prosecuted their occupation as they proceeded, did not perceive that their passenger had not become pale, neither groaned nor suffered; that in spite of that horrible tossing and rolling of the bark, to which no hand imparted direction, the novice passenger had preserved his presence of mind and his appetite. They fished, and their fishing was sufficiently fortunate. To lines bated with prawn, soles came, with numerous gambols, to bite. Two nets had already been broken by the immense weight of congers and haddocks; three sea-eels plowed the hold with their slimy folds and their dying contortions. D'Artagnan brought them good luck; they told him so. The soldier found the occupation so pleasant, that he put his hand to the work—that is to say, to the lines—and uttered roars of joy, and *mordious* enough to have astonished his musketeers themselves every time that a shock given to his line by the captured fish required the play of the muscles of his arm, and the employment of his best dexterity. The party of pleasure had made him forget his diplomatic mission. He was struggling with a very large conger, and holding fast with one hand to the side of the vessel, in order to seize with the other the gaping jowl of his antagonist, when the master said to him. “Take care they don’t see you from Belle-Isle!”

These words produced the same effect upon D'Artagnan as the hissing of the first bullet on a day of battle; he let go of both line and conger, which, dragging each other, returned again to the water. D'Artagnan perceived, within half a league at most, the blue and marked profile of the rocks of Belle-Isle, dominated by the majestic whiteness of the castle. In the distance, the land with its forests and verdant plains; cattle on the grass. This was what first attracted the attention of the musketeer. The sun darted its rays of gold upon the sea, raising a

shining mist round this enchanted isle. Little could be seen of it, owing to this dazzling light, but the salient points; every shadow was strongly marked, and cut with bands of darkness the luminous fields and walls. "Eh! eh!" said D'Artagnan, at the aspect of those masses of black rocks, "these are fortifications which do not stand in need of any engineer to render a landing difficult. How the devil can a landing be effected on that isle which God has defended so completely?"

"This way," replied the patron of the bark, changing the sail, and impressing upon the rudder a twist which turned the boat in the direction of a pretty little port, quite coquettish, round, and newly battlemented.

"What the devil do I see yonder?" said D'Artagnan.

"You see Leomaria," replied the fisherman.

"Well, but there?"

"That is Bragos."

"And further on?"

"Sanger, and then the palace."

"*Mordieux!* It is a world. Ah! there are some soldiers."

"There are seventeen hundred men in Belle-Isle, monsieur," replied the fisherman, proudly. "Do you know that the least garrison is of twenty companies of infantry?"

"*Mordieux!*" cried D'Artagnan, stamping with his foot. "His majesty was right enough."

They landed.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH THE READER, NO DOUBT, WILL BE AS ASTONISHED AS D'ARTAGNAN WAS TO MEET AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

THERE is always something in a landing, if it be only from the smallest sea-boat—a trouble and a confusion which do not leave the mind the liberty of which it stands in need in order to study at the first glance the new locality presented to it. The movable bridges, the agitated sailors, the noise of the water on the pebbles, the cries and importunities of those who wait upon the shores, are multiplied details of that sensation which is summed up in one single result—hesitation. It was not, then, till after standing several minutes on the shore that D'Artagnan saw upon the port, but more particularly in the interior of the isle, an immense number of workmen in motion. At his feet D'Artagnan recognized the five cha-lands laden with rough stone he had seen leave the port of Pirial. The smaller stones were transported to the shore by means of a chain formed by twenty-five or thirty peasants, The large stones were loaded on trollies which conveyed them in the same direction as the others, that is to say towards the works, of which D'Artagnan could as yet appreciate neither the strength nor the extent. Everywhere was to be seen an activity equal to that which Telemachus observed on his landing at Salentum. D'Artagnan felt a strong inclination to penetrate into the interior; but he could not, under the penalty of exciting mistrust, exhibit too much curiosity. He advanced then little by little, scarcely going beyond the line formed

by the fishermen on the beach, observing everything, saying nothing, and meeting all suspicion that might have been excited with a half-silly question or a polite bow. And yet, whilst his companions carried on their trade, giving or selling their fish to the workmen or the inhabitants of the city, D'Artagnan had gained ground by degrees, and, reassured by the little attention paid to him, he began to cast an intelligent and confident look upon the men and things that appeared before his eyes. And his very first glance fell on certain movements of earth about which the eye of a soldier could not be mistaken. At the two extremities of the port, in order that their fires should converge upon the great axis of the ellipsis formed by the basin, in the first place, two batteries had been raised, evidently destined to receive flank pieces, for D'Artagnan saw the workmen finishing the platform and making ready the demi-circumference in wood upon which the wheels of the pieces might turn to embrace every direction over the epaulement. By the side of each of these batteries other workmen were strengthening gabions filled with earth, the lining of another battery. The latter had embrasures, and the overseer of the works called successively men who, with cords, tied the *saucissons* and cut the lozenges and right angles of turfs destined to retain the matting of the embrasures. By the activity displayed in these works, already so far advanced, they might be considered as finished: they were not yet furnished with their cannons, but the platforms had their *gîtes* and their *madriers* all prepared; the earth, beaten carefully, was consolidated; and supposing the artillery to be on the island, in less than two or three days the port might be completely armed. That which astonished D'Artagnan, when he turned his eyes from the coast batteries to the fortifications of the city, was to see that Belle-Isle was defended by an entirely new system, of which he had

often heard the Comte de la Fère speak as a wonderful advance, but of which he had as yet never seen the application. These fortifications belonged neither to the Dutch method of Marollais, nor to the French method of the Chevalier Antoine de Ville, but to the system of Manesson Mallet, a skillful engineer, who about six or eight years previously had quitted the service of Portugal to enter that of France. The works had this peculiarity, that instead of raising above the earth, as did the ancient ramparts destined to defend a city from escalades, they on the contrary, sank into it; and what created the height of the walls was the depth of the ditches. It did not take long to make D'Artagnan perceive the superiority of such a system, which gives no advantage to cannon. Besides, as the *fossés* were lower than, or on a level with, the sea, these *fossés* could be instantly inundated by means of subterranean sluices. Otherwise, the works were almost complete, and a group of workmen, receiving orders from a man who appeared to be conductor of the works, were occupied in placing the last stones. A bridge of planks, thrown over the *fossés* for the greater convenience of the maneuvers connected with the barrows, joined the interior to the exterior. With an air of simple curiosity, D'Artagnan asked if he might be permitted to cross the bridge, and he was told that no order prevented it. Consequently, he crossed the bridge, and advanced towards the group.

This group was superintended by the man whom D'Artagnan had already remarked, and who appeared to be the engineer-in-chief. A plan was lying open before him upon a large stone forming a table, and at some paces from him a crane was in action. This engineer, who by his evident importance first attracted the attention of D'Artagnan, wore a *justaucorps*, which, from its sumptuousness, was scarcely in harmony with the work

he was employed in, that rather necessitated the costume of a master-mason than of a noble. He was a man of immense stature and great square shoulders, and wore a hat covered with feathers. He gesticulated in the most majestic manner, and appeared, for D'Artagnan only saw his back, to be scolding the workmen for their idleness and want of strength.

D'Artagnan continued to draw nearer. At that moment the man with the feathers ceased to gesticulate, and, with his hands placed upon his knees, was following, half-bent, the effort of six workmen to raise a block of hewn stone to the top of a piece of timber destined to support that stone, so that the cord of the crane might be passed under it. The six men, all on one side of the stone, united their efforts to raise it to eight or ten inches from the ground, sweating and blowing, whilst a seventh got ready against there should be daylight enough beneath it to slide in the roller that was to support it. But the stone had already twice escaped from their hands before gaining a sufficient height for the roller to be introduced. There can be no doubt that every time the stone escaped them, they bounded quickly backwards, to keep their feet from being crushed by the refalling stone. Every time, the stone, abandoned by them, sunk deeper into the damp earth, which rendered the operation more and more difficult. A third effort was followed by no better success, but with progressive discouragement. And yet, when the six men were bent towards the stone, the man with the feathers had himself, with a powerful voice, given the word of command, "*Ferme!*" which regulates maneuvers of strength. Then he drew himself up.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "what is all this about? Have I to do with men of straw? *Corne de bœuf!* stand on one side, and you shall see how this is to be done."

"*Peste!*" said D'Artagnan, "will he pretend to raise

that rock? that would be a sight worth looking at."

The workmen, as commanded by the engineer, drew back with their ears down, and shaking their heads, with the exception of the one who held the plank, who prepared to perform the office. The man with the feathers went up to the stone, stooped, slipped his hands under the face lying upon the ground, stiffened his Herculean muscles, and, without a strain, with a slow motion, like that of a machine, he lifted the end of the rock a foot from the ground. The workman who held the plank profited by the space thus given him, and slipped the roller under the stone.

"That's the way," said the giant, not letting the rock fall again, but placing it upon its support.

"*Mordious !*" cried D'Artagnan, "I know but one man capable of such a feat of strength."

"*Hein !*" cried the colossus, turning round.

"Porthos !" murmured D'Artagnan, seized with stupor, "Porthos at Belle-Isle !"

On his part, the man with the feathers fixed his eyes upon the disguised lieutenant, and, in spite of his metamorphosis, recognized him. "D'Artagnan !" cried he ; and the color mounted to his face. "Hush !" said he to D'Artagnan.

"Hush !" in his turn, said the musketeer. In fact, if Porthos had just been discovered by D'Artagnan, D'Artagnan had just been discovered by Porthos. The interest of the particular secret of each struck them both at the same instant. Nevertheless, the first movement of the two men was to throw their arms round each other. What they wished to conceal from the bystanders, was not their friendship, but their names. But, after the embrace, came reflection.

"What the devil brings Porthos to Belle-Isle, lifting stones ?" said D'Artagnan ; only D'Artagnan uttered

that question in a low voice. Less strong in diplomacy than his friend, Porthos thought aloud.

"How the devil did you come to Belle-Isle?" asked he of D'Artagnan; "and what do you want to do here?" It was necessary to reply without hesitation. To hesitate in his answer to Porthos would have been a check, for which the self-love of D'Artagnan would never have consoled itself.

"*Pardieu!* my friend, I am at Belle-Isle because *you* are."

"Ah, bah!" said Porthos, visibly stupefied with the argument, and seeking to account for it to himself, with the felicity of deduction we know to be peculiar to him.

"Without doubt," continued D'Artagnan, unwilling to give his friend time to recollect himself, "I have been to see you at Pierrefonds."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"And you did not find me there?"

"No, but I found Mouston."

"Is he well?"

"*Peste!*"

"Well, but Mouston did not tell you I was here."

"Why should he *not*? Have I, perchance, deserved to lose his confidence?"

"No; but he did not know it."

"Well; that is a reason at least that does not offend my self-love."

"Then, how did you manage to find me?"

"My dear friend, a great noble, like you, always leaves traces behind him on his passage; and I should think but poorly of myself, if I were not sharp enough to follow the traces of my friends." This explanation, flattering as it was, did not entirely satisfy Porthos.

"But I left no traces behind me, for I came here disguised," said Porthos.

"Ah! You came disguised, did you?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"And how?"

"As a miller."

"And do you think a great noble, like you, Porthos, can affect common manners so as to deceive people?"

"Well, I swear to you, my friend, that I played my part so well that *everybody* was deceived."

"Indeed! so well, that I have not discovered and joined you?"

"Yes; but *how* did you discover and join me?"

"Stop a bit. I was going to tell you how. Do you imagine Mouston——?"

"Ah! it was that fellow, Mouston," said Porthos, gathering up those two triumphant arches which served him for eyebrows.

"But stop, I tell you—it was no fault of Mouston's, because he was ignorant of where you were."

"I know he was; and that is why I am in such haste to understand——"

"Oh! how impatient you are, Porthos."

"When I do not comprehend, I am terrible."

"Well, you will understand. Aramis wrote to you at Pierrefonds, did he not?"

"Yes."

"And he told you to come before the equinox."

"That is true."

"Well! that is it," said D'Artagnan, hoping that this reason would mystify Porthos. Porthos appeared to give himself up to a violent mental labor.

"Yes, yes," said he, "I understand. As Aramis told me to come before the equinox, you have understood that that was to join him. You then inquired where Aramis was, saying to yourself, 'Where Aramis is, there Porthos

will be.' You have learnt that Aramis was in Bretagne, and you said to yourself, 'Porthos is in Bretagne.'"

"Exactly. In good truth, Porthos, I cannot tell why you have not turned conjurer. So you understand that, arriving at Roche-Bernard, I heard of the splendid fortifications going on at Belle-Isle. The account raised my curiosity, I embarked in a fishing-boat, without dreaming that you were here: I came, and I saw a monstrous fine fellow lifting a stone Ajax could not have stirred. I cried out, 'Nobody but the Baron de Bracieux could have performed such a feat of strength.' You heard me, you turned round, you recognized me, we embraced; and, *ma foi*! if you like, my dear friend, we will embrace again."

"Ah! now all is explained," said Porthos; and he embraced D'Artagnan with so much friendship as to deprive the musketeer of his breath for five minutes.

"Why, you are stronger than ever," said D'Artagnan, "and still, happily, in your *arms*." Porthos saluted D'Artagnan with a gracious smile. During the five minutes D'Artagnan was recovering his breath, he reflected that he had a very difficult part to play. It was necessary that he always should question and never reply. By the time his respiration returned, he had fixed his plans for the campaign.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEREIN THE IDEAS OF D'ARTAGNAN, AT FIRST STRANGELY CLOUDED, BEGIN TO CLEAR UP A LITTLE.

D'ARTAGNAN immediately took the offensive. "Now that I have told you all, dear friend, or rather now you have guessed all, tell me what you are doing here, covered with dust and mud?"

Porthos wiped his brow, and looked around him with pride. "Why, it appears," said he, "that you may see what I am doing here."

"No doubt, no doubt, you lift great stones."

"Oh! to show these idle fellows what a *man* is," said Porthos, with contempt. "But you understand——"

"Yes, that it is not your place to lift stones, although there are many whose place it is, who cannot lift them as you do. It was that which made me ask you, just now. What are you doing here, baron?"

"I am studying topography, chevalier."

"You are studying topography?"

"Yes; but you—what are you doing in that common dress?"

D'Artagnan perceived he had committed a fault in giving expression to his astonishment. Porthos had taken advantage of it, to retort with a question. "Why," said he, "you know I am a bourgeois, in fact; my dress, then, has nothing astonishing in it, since it conforms with my condition."

"Nonsense! you are a musketeer."

"You are wrong, my friend; I have given in my resignation."

"Bah!"

"Oh, *mon Dieu*! yes."

"And have you abandoned the service?"

"I have quitted it."

"You have abandoned the king?"

"Quite."

Porthos raised his arms towards heaven, like a man who has heard extraordinary news. "Well, that *does* confound me," said he.

"It is nevertheless true."

"And what led you to form such a resolution?"

"The king displeased me. Mazarin had disgusted me

for a long time, as you know; so I threw my cassock to the nettles."

"But Mazarin is dead."

"I know that well enough, *parbleu!* Only, at the period of his death, my resignation had been given in and accepted two months. Then, feeling myself free, I set off for Pierrefonds, to see my friend Porthos. I had heard talk of the happy division you had made of your time, and I wished, for a fortnight, to divide mine after your fashion."

"My friend, you know that it is not for a fortnight my house is open to you; it is for a year—for ten years—for life."

"Thank you, Porthos."

"Ah! but perhaps you want money—do you?" said Porthos, making something like fifty louis chink in his pocket. "In that case, you know——"

"No, thank you; I am not in want of anything. I placed my savings with Planchet, who pays me the interest of them."

"Your savings?"

"Yes, to be sure," said D'Artagnan: "why should I not put by my savings, as well as another, Porthos?"

"Oh, there is no reason why; on the contrary, I always suspected you—that is to say, Aramis always suspected you to have savings. For my own part, d'ye see, I take no concern about the management of my household; but I presume the savings of a musketeer must be small."

"No doubt, relative to yourself, Porthos, who are a millionaire; but you shall judge. I had laid by twenty-five thousand livres."

"That's pretty well," said Porthos, with an affable air.

"And," continued D'Artagnan, "on the twenty-eighth of last month I added to it two hundred thousand livres more."

Porthos opened his large eyes, which eloquently demanded of the musketeer, Where the devil did you steal such a sum as that, my dear friend? "Two hundred thousand livres!" cried he, at length.

"Yes; which, with the twenty-five I had, and twenty thousand I have about me, complete the sum of two hundred and forty-five thousand livres."

"But tell me, whence comes this fortune?"

"I will tell you all about it presently, dear friend; but as you have, in the first place, many things to tell me yourself, let us have my recital in its proper order."

"Bravo!" said Porthos; "then we are both rich. But what can I have to relate to you?"

"You have to relate to me how Aramis came to be named——"

"Ah! bishop of Vannes."

"That's it," said D'Artagnan, "bishop of Vannes. Dear Aramis! do you know how he succeeded so well?"

"Yes, yes; without reckoning that he does not mean to stop there."

"What! do you mean, he will not be contented with violet stockings, and that he wants a red hat?"

"Hush! that is *promised* him."

"Bah! by the king?"

"By somebody more powerful than the king."

"Ah! the devil! Porthos: what incredible things you tell me, my friend!"

"Why incredible? Is there not *always* somebody in France more powerful than the king?"

"Oh, yes; in the time of King Louis XIII. it was Cardinal Richelieu; in the time of the Regency it was Cardinal Mazarin. In the time of Louis XIV. it is M——"

"Go on."

"It is M. Fouquet."

"Jove! you have hit it the first time."

"So, then, I suppose it is M. Fouquet who has promised Aramis the red hat?"

Porthos assumed an air of reserve. "Dear friend," said he, "God preserve me from meddling with the affairs of others, above all from revealing secrets it may be to their interest to keep. When you see Aramis, he will tell you all he thinks he ought to tell you."

"You are right, Porthos; and you are quite a padlock for safety. But, to revert to yourself?"

"Yes," said Porthos.

"You said just now you came hither to study topography?"

"I did so."

"*Tudieu!* my friend, what fine things you will do!"

"How do you mean?"

"Why, these fortifications are admirable."

"Is that your opinion?"

"Decidedly it is. In truth, to anything but a regular siege, Belle-Isle is absolutely impregnable."

Porthos rubbed his hands. "That is my opinion," said he.

"But who the devil has fortified this paltry little place in this manner?"

Porthos drew himself up proudly: "Did not I tell you who?"

"No."

"Do you not suspect?"

"No; all I can say is that he is a man who has studied all the systems, and who appears to me to have stopped at the best."

"Hush!" said Porthos; "consider my modesty, my dear D'Artagnan."

"In truth," replied the musketeer, "can it be you—who—oh!"

"Pray—my dear friend——"

"You who have imagined, traced, and combined between these bastions, these redans, these curtains, these half-moons; and are preparing that covered way?"

"I beg you——"

"You who have built that lunette with its retiring angles and its salient angles."

"My friend——"

"You who have given that inclination to the openings of your embrasures, by means of which you so effectively protect the men who serve the guns!"

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* yes."

"Oh! Porthos, Porthos! I must bow down before you—I must admire you! But you have always concealed from us this superb, this incomparable genius. I hope, my dear friend, you will show me all this in detail?"

"Nothing more easy. Here lies my original sketch, my plan."

"Show it me." Porthos led D'Artagnan towards the stone that served him for a table, and upon which the plan was spread. At the foot of the plan was written, in the formidable writing of Porthos, writing of which we have already had occasion to speak:—

"Instead of making use of the square or rectangle, as has been done to this time, you will suppose your place inclosed in a regular hexagon, this polygon having the advantage of offering more angles than the quadrilateral one. Every side of your hexagon, of which you will determine the length in proportion to the dimensions taken upon the place, will be divided into two parts, and upon the middle point you will elevate a perpendicular towards the center of the polygon, which will equal in length the sixth part of the side. By the extremities of each side of the polygon, you will trace two diagonals, which will cut the perpendicular. These will form the precise lines of your defense."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan, stopping at this point of the demonstration; "Why, this is a complete system, Porthos."

"Entirely," said Porthos. "Continue."

"No; I have read enough of it; but, since it is you, my dear Porthos, who direct the works, what need have you of setting down your system so formally in writing?"

"Oh! my dear friend, death!"

"How! death?"

"Why, we are all mortal, are we not?"

"That is true," said D'Artagnan; "you have a reply for everything, my friend." And he replaced the plan upon the stone.

But however short the time he had the plan in his hands, D'Artagnan had been able to distinguish, under the enormous writing of Porthos, a much more delicate hand, which reminded him of certain letters to Marie Michon, with which he had been acquainted in his youth. Only the India-rubber had passed and repassed so often over this writing that it might have escaped a less practiced eye than that of our musketeer.

"Bravo! my friend, bravo!" said D'Artagnan.

"And now you know all that you want to know, do you not?" said Porthos, wheeling about.

"*Mordieu!* yes, only do me one last favor, dear friend?"

"Speak, I am master here."

"Do me the pleasure to tell me the name of that gentleman who is walking yonder."

"Where, there?"

"Behind the soldiers."

"Followed by a lackey?"

"Exactly."

"In company with a mean sort of fellow, dressed in black?"

"Yes, I mean him."

"That is M. Gétard."

"And who is Gétard, my friend?"

"He is the architect of the house."

"Of what house?"

"Of M. Fouquet's house."

"Ah! ah!" cried D'Artagnan, "you are of the household of M. Fouquet, then, Porthos?"

"I! what do you mean by that?" said the topographer, blushing to the top of his ears.

"Why, you say the house, when speaking of Belle-Isle, as if you were speaking of the château of Pierrefonds."

Porthos bit his lips. "Belle-Isle, my friend," said he, "belongs to M. Fouquet, does it not?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"As Pierrefonds belongs to me?"

"I told you I believed so; there are no two words to *that*."

"Did you ever see a man there who is accustomed to walk about with a ruler in his hand?"

"No; but I might have seen him there, if he really walked there."

"Well, that gentleman is M. Boulingrin."

"Who is M. Boulingrin?"

"Now we are coming to it. If, when this gentleman is walking with a ruler in his hand, any one should ask me, —'Who is M. Boulingrin?' I should reply: 'He is the architect of the house.' Well! M. Gétard is the Boulingrin of M. Fouquet. But he has nothing to do with the fortifications, which are my department alone; do you understand? mine, absolutely mine."

"Ah! Porthos," cried D'Artagnan, letting his arms fall as a conquered man gives up his sword; "ah! my friend, you are not only a herculean topographer, you are, still further, a dialectician of the first water."

"Is it not powerfully reasoned?" said Porthos: and he puffed and blew like the conger which D'Artagnan had let slip from his hand.

"And, now," said D'Artagnan, "that shabby-looking man, who accompanies M. Gétard, is he also of the household of M. Fouquet?"

"Oh! yes," said Porthos, with contempt; "it is one M. Jupenet, or Juponet, a sort of poet."

"Who is to come to establish himself here?"

"I believe so."

"I thought M. Fouquet had poets enough, yonder—Scudery, Loret, Pellisson, La Fontaine? If I must tell you the truth, Porthos, that poet disgraces you."

"Eh!—my friend; but what saves us is that he is not here as a poet."

"As what, then, is he?"

"As printer. And you make me remember, I have a word to say to the *cuisire*."

"Say it, then."

Porthos made a sign to Jupenet, who perfectly recollected D'Artagnan, and did not care to come nearer; which naturally produced another sign from Porthos. This was so imperative, he was obliged to obey. As he approached. "Come hither!" said Porthos. "You only landed yesterday, and you have begun your tricks already."

"How so, monsieur le baron?" asked Jupenet, trembling.

"Your press was groaning all night, monsieur," said Porthos, "and you prevented my sleeping, *corne de bœuf*!"

"Monsieur——" objected Jupenet, timidly.

"You have nothing yet to print: therefore you have no occasion to set your press going. What did you print last night?"

"Monsieur, a light poem of my own composition."

"Light! no, no, monsieur; the press groaned pitifully beneath it. Let it not happen again. Do you understand?"

"Yes; monsieur."

"You promise me?"

"I do, monsieur!"

"Very well; this time I pardon you. Adieu!"

"Well, now we have combed that fellow's head, let us breakfast."

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan, "let us breakfast."

"Only," said Porthos, "I beg you to observe my friend, that we have only two hours for our repast."

"What would you have? We will try to make two hours suffice. But why have you only two hours?"

"Because it is high tide at one o'clock, and, with the tide, I am going to Vannes. But, as I shall return to-morrow, my dear friend, you can stay here; you shall be master; I have a good cook and a good cellar."

"No," interrupted D'Artagnan, "better than that."

"What?"

"You are going to Vannes, you say?"

"To a certainty."

"To see Aramis?"

"Yes."

"Well! I came from Paris on purpose to see Aramis."

"That's true."

"I will go with you then."

"Do; that's the thing."

"Only, I ought to have seen Aramis first, and you after. But man proposes, and God disposes. I have begun with you, and will finish with Aramis."

"Very well!"

"And in how many hours can you go from here to Vannes?"

"Oh! *pardieu!* in six hours. Three hours by sea to

Sarzeau, three hours by road from Sarzeau to Vannes."

"How convenient that is! Being so near to the bishopric; do you often go to Vannes?"

"Yes; once a week. But, stop till I get my plan."

Porthos picked up his plan, folded it carefully, and engulfed it in his large pocket.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan aside; "I think I now know the real engineer who is fortifying Belle-Isle."

Two hours after, at high tide, Porthos and D'Artagnan set out for Sarzeau.

CHAPTER XV.

A PROCESSION AT VANNES.

THE passage from Belle-Isle to Sarzeau was made rapidly enough, thanks to one of those little corsairs of which D'Artagnan had been told during his voyage, and which, shaped for fast sailing and destined for the chase, were sheltered at that time in the roadstead of Loc-Maria, where one of them, with a quarter of its war-crew, performed duty between Belle-Isle and the continent. D'Artagnan had an opportunity of convincing himself that Porthos, though engineer and topographer, was not deeply versed in affairs of state. His perfect ignorance, with any other, might have passed for well-informed dissimulation. But D'Artagnan knew too well all the folds and refolds of his Porthos, not to find a secret if there were one there; like those regular, minute old bachelors, who know how to find, with their eyes shut, each book on the shelves of their library and each piece of linen in their wardrobe. So if he had found nothing, our cunning D'Artagnan, in rolling and unrolling his Porthos, it was because, in truth, there was nothing to be found.

"Be it so," said D'Artagnan; "I shall get to know more at Vannes in half an hour, than Porthos has discovered at Belle-Isle in two months. Only, in order that I may know something, it is important that Porthos should not make use of the only stratagem I leave at his disposal. He must not warn Aramis of my arrival." All the care of the musketeer was then, for the moment, confined to the watching of Porthos. And let us hasten to say, Porthos did not deserve all this mistrust. Porthos thought of no evil. Perhaps, on first seeing him, D'Artagnan had inspired him with a little suspicion; but almost immediately D'Artagnan had reconquered in that good and brave heart the place he had always occupied, and not the least cloud darkened the large eye of Porthos, fixed from time to time with tenderness on his friend.

On landing, Porthos inquired if his horses were waiting and soon perceived them at the crossing of the road that winds round Sarzeau, and which, without passing through that little city, leads towards Vannes. These horses were two in number, one for M. de Vallon, and one for his equerry; for Porthos had an equerry since Mouston was only able to use a carriage as a means of locomotion. D'Artagnan expected that Porthos would propose to send forward his equerry upon one horse to bring back another, and he—D'Artagnan—had made up his mind to oppose this proposition. But nothing D'Artagnan had expected happened. Porthos simply told the equerry to dismount and await his return at Sarzeau, whilst D'Artagnan would ride his horse; which was arranged.

"Eh! but you are quite a man of precaution, my dear Porthos," said D'Artagnan to his friend, when he found himself in the saddle, upon the equerry's horse.

"Yes; but this is a kindness on the part of Aramis. I have not my stud here, and Aramis has placed his stables at my disposal."

"Good horses for bishop's horses, *mordieux!*" said D'Artagnan. "It is true, Aramis is a bishop of a peculiar kind."

"He is a holy man!" replied Porthos, in a tone almost nasal, and with his eyes raised towards heaven.

"Then he is much changed," said D'Artagnan; "you and I have known him passably profane."

"Grace has touched him," said Porthos.

"Bravo," said D'Artagnan, "that redoubles my desire to see my dear old friend." And he spurred his horse, which sprang off into a more rapid pace.

"*Peste!*" said Porthos, "if we go on at this rate, we shall only take one hour instead of two."

"To go how far, do you say, Porthos?"

"Four leagues and a half."

"That will be a good pace."

"I could have embarked you on the canal, but the devil take rowers and boat-horses! The first are like tortoises; the second like snails; and when a man is able to put a good horse between his knees, that horse is better than rowers or any other means."

"You are right; you above all, Porthos, who always look magnificent on horseback."

"Rather heavy, my friend; I was weighed the other day."

"And what do you weigh?"

"Three hundred-weight!" said Porthos, proudly.

"Bravo!"

"So that you must perceive, I am forced to choose horses whose loins are straight and wide, otherwise I break them down in two hours."

"Yes, giant's horses you must have, must you not?"

"You are very polite, my friend," replied the engineer, with affectionate majesty.

"As a case in point," replied D'Artagnan, "your horse seems to sweat already."

"*Dame!* It is hot! Ah, ah! do you see Vannes now?"

"Yes, perfectly. It is a handsome city, apparently."

"Charming, according to Aramis, at least; but I think it black; but black seems to be considered handsome by artists: I am sorry for it."

"Why so, Porthos?"

"Because I have lately had my château of Pierrefonds, which was gray with age, plastered white."

"Humph!" said D'Artagnan, "and white is more cheerful."

"Yes, but it is less august, as Aramis tells me. Fortunately there are dealers in black as well as white. I will have Pierrefonds replastered in black; that's all there is about it. If gray is handsome, you understand, my friend, black must be superb."

"*Dame!*" said D'Artagnan, "that appears logical."

"Were you never at Vannes, D'Artagnan?"

"Never."

"Then you know nothing of the city?"

"Nothing."

"Well, look!" said Porthos, raising himself in his stirrups, which made the four quarters of his horse bend sadly,—“do you see that corner, in the sun, yonder?"

"Yes, I see it plainly."

"Well that is the cathedral."

"Which is called?"

"Saint-Pierre. Now look again—in the faubourg on the left, do you see another cross?"

"Perfectly well."

"That is Saint-Paterne, the parish preferred by Aramis."

"Indeed!"

"Without doubt. Saint-Paterne, you see, passes for having been the first bishop of Vannes. It is true that Aramis pretends he was not. But he is so learned that that may be only a paro—a para——"

"A paradox," said D'Artagnan.

"Precisely; thank you! my tongue trips, I am so hot."

"My friend," said D'Artagnan, "continue your interesting description, I beg. What is that large white building with many windows?"

"Oh! that is the college of the Jesuits. *Pardieu!* you have an apt hand. Do you see, close to the college, a large house with steeples, turrets, built in a handsome Gothic style, as that fool, M. Gétard, says?"

"Yes, that is plainly to be seen. Well?"

"Well, that is where Aramis resides."

"What! does he not reside at the episcopal palace?"

"No; that is in ruins. The palace likewise is in the city, and Aramis prefers the faubourgs. That is why, as I told you, he is partial to Saint-Paterne; Saint-Paterne is in the faubourg. Besides, there are in this faubourg a mall, a tennis-court, and a house of Dominicans. Look, that where the handsome steeple rises to the heavens."

"Well?"

"Next, you see the faubourg is like a separate city, it has its walls, its towers, its ditches; the quay is upon it likewise, and the boats land at the quay. If our little corsair did not draw eight feet of water, we could have come full sail up to Aramis's windows."

"Porthos, Porthos," cried D'Artagnan, "you are a well of knowledge, a spring of ingenious and profound reflections. Porthos, you no longer surprise me, you confound me."

"Here we are," said Porthos, turning the conversation with his usual modesty.

"And high time we were," thought D'Artagnan, "for Aramis's horse is melting away like a steed of ice."

They entered almost at the same instant the faubourg; but scarcely had they gone a hundred paces when they were surprised to find the streets strewn with leaves and flowers. Against the old walls of Vannes, hung the oldest and the strangest tapestries of France. From over balconies fell long white sheets stuck all over with bouquets. The streets were deserted; it was plain the entire population was assembled on one point. The blinds were closed, and the breeze penetrated into the houses under the hangings, which cast long black shades between their places of issue and the walls. Suddenly, at the turning of a street, chants struck the ears of the newly arrived travelers. A crowd in holiday garb appeared through the vapors of incense which mounted to the heavens in blue fleeces, and clouds of rose-leaves fluttered as high as the first stories. Above all heads were to be seen the cross and banners, the sacred symbols of religion. Then, beneath these crosses and banners, as if protected by them, walked a whole world of young girls clothed in white, crowned with corn-flowers. At the two sides of the street, inclosing the *cortége*, marched the guards of the garrison, carrying bouquets in the barrels of their muskets and on the points of their lances. This was the procession.

Whilst D'Artagnan and Porthos were looking on with critical glances, which disguised an extreme impatience to get forward, a magnificent *daïs* approached preceded by a hundred Jesuits and a hundred Dominicans, and escorted by two archdeacons, a treasurer, a penitent and twelve canons. A singer with a thundering voice—a man certainly picked out from all the voices of France, as was the drum-major of the imperial guard from all the giants of the empire—escorted by four other chanters,

who appeared to be there only to serve him as an accompaniment, made the air resound, and the windows of the houses vibrate. Under the dais appeared a pale and noble countenance, with black eyes, black hair streaked with threads of white, a delicate, compressed mouth, a prominent and angular chin. His head, full of graceful majesty was covered with the episcopal mitre, a head-dress which gave it, in addition to the character of sovereignty, that of asceticism and evangelic meditation.

“Aramis!” cried the musketeer, involuntarily, as this lofty countenance passed before him. The prelate started at the sound of the voice. He raised his large black eyes, with their long lashes, and turned them without hesitation towards the spot whence the exclamation proceeded. At a glance, he saw Porthos and D’Artagnan close to him. On his part, D’Artagnan, thanks to the keenness of his sight, had seen all, seized all. The full portrait of the prelate had entered his memory, never to leave it. One thing had particularly struck D’Artagnan. On perceiving him, Aramis had colored, then he had concentrated under his eyelids the fire of the look of the master, and the indefinable affection of the friend. It was evident that Aramis had asked himself this question:—“Why is D’Artagnan with Porthos, and what does he want at Vannes?” Aramis comprehended all that was passing in the mind of D’Artagnan, on turning his look upon him again, and seeing that he had not lowered his eyes. He knew the acuteness and intelligence of his friend; he feared to let him divine the secret of his blush and his astonishment. He was still the same Aramis, always having a secret to conceal. Therefore, to put an end to his look of an inquisitor, which it was necessary to get rid of at all events, as, at any price, a general extinguishes a battery which annoys him, Aramis stretched forth his beautiful white hand, upon which sparkled the amethyst

of the pastoral ring; he cut the air with sign of the cross and poured out his benediction upon his two friends. Perhaps, thoughtful and absent, D'Artagnan, impious in spite of himself, might not have bent beneath this holy benediction; but Porthos saw his distraction, and laying his friendly hand upon the back of his companion, he crushed him down towards the earth. D'Artagnan was forced to give way; indeed, he was little short of being flat on the ground. In the meantime Aramis had passed. D'Artagnan, like Antæus, had only touched the ground, and he turned towards Porthos, almost angry. But there was no mistaking the intention of the brave Hercules; it was a feeling of religious propriety that had influenced him. Besides, speech, with Porthos, instead of disguising his thought, always completed it.

"It is very polite of him," said he, to have given his benediction to us alone. Decidedly, he is a holy man, and a brave man." Less convinced than Porthos, D'Artagnan made no reply.

"Observe, my friend," continued Porthos, "he has seen us; and, instead of continuing to walk on at the simple pace of the procession, as he did just now,—see, what a hurry he is in; do you see how the *cortége* is increasing its speed? He is eager to join us and embrace us, is that dear Aramis."

"That is true," replied D'Artagnan, aloud.—Then to himself:—"It is equally true, he has seen me, the fox, and will have time to prepare himself to receive me."

But the procession had passed; the road was free. D'Artagnan and Porthos walked straight up to the episcopal palace, which was surrounded by a numerous crowd anxious to see the prelate return. D'Artagnan remarked that this crowd was composed principally of citizens and military men. He recognized in the nature of these partisans the address of his friend. Aramis was

not the man to seek for a useless popularity. He cared very little for being beloved by people who could be of no service to him. Women, children, and old men, that is to say, the *cortège* of ordinary pastors, was not the *cortège* for him.

Ten minutes after the two friends had passed the threshold of the palace, Aramis returned like a triumphant conqueror; the soldiers presented arms to him as to a superior; the citizens bowed to him as to a friend and a patron, rather than as a head of the Church. There was something in Aramis resembling those Roman senators who had their doors always surrounded by clients. At the foot of the prison, he had a conference of half a minute with a Jesuit, who, in order to speak to him more secretly, passed his head under the dais. He then re-entered his palace; the doors closed slowly, and the crowd melted away, whilst chants and prayers were still resounding abroad. It was a magnificent day. Earthly perfumes were mingled with the perfumes of the air and the sea. The city breathed happiness, joy, and strength. D'Artagnan felt something like the presence of an invisible hand which had, all-powerfully, created this strength, this joy, this happiness, and spread everywhere these perfumes.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "Porthos has got fat; but Aramis is grown taller!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GRANDEUR OF THE BISHOP OF VANNES.

PORTHOS and D'Artagnan had entered the bishop's residence by a private door, as his personal friends. Of course, Porthos served D'Artagnan as guide. The worthy

baron comported himself everywhere rather as if he were at home. Nevertheless, whether it was a tacit acknowledgment of the sanctity of the personage of Aramis and his character, or the habit of respecting him who imposed upon him morally, a worthy habit which had always made Porthos a model soldier and an excellent companion; for all these reasons, say we, Porthos preserved in the palace of His Greatness the Bishop of Vannes a sort of reserve which D'Artagnan remarked at once, in the attitude he took with respect to the valets and officers. And yet this reserve did not go so far as to prevent his asking questions. Porthos questioned. They learned that His Greatness had just returned to his apartment and was preparing to appear in familiar intimacy, less majestic than he had appeared with his flock. After a quarter of an hour, which D'Artagnan and Porthos passed in looking mutually at each other with the white of their eyes, and turning their thumbs in all the different evolutions which go from north to south, a door of the chamber opened and His Greatness appeared, dressed in the undress, complete, of a prelate. Aramis carried his head high, like a man accustomed to command: his violet robe was tucked up on one side, and his white hand was on his hip. He had retained the fine mustache, and the lengthened *royale* of the time of Louis XIII. He exhaled, on entering, that delicate perfume which, among elegant men and women of high fashion, never changes, and appears to be incorporated in the person, of whom it has become the natural emanation. In this case only, the perfume had retained something of the religious sublimity of incense. It no longer intoxicated, it penetrated; it no longer inspired desire, it inspired respect. Aramis, on entering the chamber, did not hesitate an instant; and without pronouncing one word, which, whatever it might be, would have been cold on such an

occasion, he went straight up to the musketeer, so well disguised under the costume of M. Agnan, and pressed him in his arms with a tenderness which the most distrustful could not have suspected of coldness or affectation.

D'Artagnan, on his part, embraced him with equal ardor. Porthos pressed the delicate hand of Aramis in his immense hands, and D'Artagnan remarked that His Greatness gave him his left hand, probably from habit, seeing that Porthos already ten times had been near injuring his fingers covered with rings, by pounding his flesh in the vise of his fist. Warned by the pain, Aramis was cautious, and only presented flesh to be bruised, and not fingers to be crushed, against gold or the angles of diamonds.

Between two embraces, Aramis looked D'Artagnan in the face, offered him a chair, sitting down himself in the shade, observing that the light fell full upon the face of his interlocutor. This maneuver, familiar to diplomatists and women, resembles much the advantage of the guard which, according to their skill or habit, combatants endeavor to take on the ground at a duel. D'Artagnan was not the dupe of this maneuver; but he did not appear to perceive it. He felt himself caught; but, precisely because he was caught, he felt himself on the road to discovery, and it little imported to him, old condottière as he was, to be beaten in appearance, provided he drew from his pretended defeat the advantages of victory. Aramis began the conversation.

"Ah! dear friend! my good D'Artagnan," said he, "what an excellent chance!"

"It is a chance, my reverend companion," said D'Artagnan, "that I will call friendship. I seek you, as I always have sought you, when I had any grand enterprise to propose to you, or some hours of liberty to give you."

"Ah! indeed," said Aramis, without explosion, "you have been seeking me?"

"Eh! yes, he has been seeking you, Aramis," said Porthos, "and the proof is that he has unharbored me at Belle-Isle. That is amiable, is it not?"

"Ah! yes," said Aramis, "at Belle-Isle! certainly!"

"Good!" said D'Artagnan; "there is my booby Porthos, without thinking of it, has fired the first cannon of attack."

"At Belle-Isle!" said Aramis, "in that hole, in that desert! That is kind, indeed!"

"And it was I who told him you were at Vannes," continued Porthos, in the same tone.

D'Artagnan armed his mouth with a finesse almost ironical.

"Yes, I knew, but I was willing to see," replied he.

"To see what?"

"If our old friendship still held out; if, on seeing each other, our hearts, hardened as they are by age, would still let the old cry of joy escape, which salutes the coming of a friend."

"Well, and you must have been satisfied," said Aramis.

"So, so."

"How is that?"

"Yes, Porthos said hush! and you——"

"Well! and I?"

"And you gave me your benediction."

"What would you have, my friend?" said Aramis, smiling; "that is the most precious thing that a poor prelate, like me, has to give."

"Indeed, my dear friend!"

"Doubtless."

"And yet they say at Paris that the bishopric of Vannes is one of the best in France."

"Ah! 'you are now speaking of temporal wealth," said Aramis, with a careless air.

"To be sure, I wish to speak of that; I hold by it, on my part."

"In that case, let me speak of it," said Aramis, with a smile.

"You own yourself to be one of the richest prelates in France?"

"My friend, since you ask me to give you an account, I will tell you that the bishopric of Vannes is worth about twenty thousand livres a year, neither more nor less. It is a diocese which contains a hundred and sixty parishes."

"That is very pretty," said D'Artagnan.

"It is superb!" said Porthos.

"And yet," resumed D'Artagnan, throwing his eyes over Aramis, "you don't mean to bury yourself here forever?"

"Pardon me. Only I do not admit the word *bury*."

"But it seems to me, that at this distance from Paris a man is buried, or nearly so."

"My friend, I am getting old," said Aramis; "the noise and bustle of a city no longer suit me. At fifty-seven we ought to seek calm and meditation. I have found them here. What is there more beautiful, and stern at the same time, than this old Armorica. I find here, dear D'Artagnan, all that is opposite to what I formerly loved, and that is what must happen at the end of life, which is opposite to the beginning. A little of my old pleasure of former times still comes to salute me here, now and then, without diverting me from the road of salvation. I am still of this world, and yet, every step that I take brings me nearer to God."

"Eloquent, wise, and discreet; you are an accomplished prelate, Aramis, and I offer you my congratulations."

"But," said Aramis, smiling, "you did not come here only for the purpose of paying me compliments. Speak; what brings you hither!" May it be that, in some fashion or other, you want me?"

"Thank God, no, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "it is nothing of that kind.—I am rich and free."

"Rich!" exclaimed Aramis.

"Yes, rich for me; not for you, or Porthos, understand. I have an income of about fifteen thousand livres."

Aramis looked at him suspiciously. He could not believe—particularly on seeing his friend in such humble guise—that he had made so fine a fortune. Then D'Artagnan, seeing that the hour of explanations was come, related the history of his English adventures. During the recital he saw ten times the eyes of the prelate sparkle, and his slender fingers work convulsively. As to Porthos, it was not admiration he manifested for D'Artagnan; it was enthusiasm, it was delirium. When D'Artagnan had finished, "Well!" said Aramis.

"Well!" said D'Artagnan, "you see, then, I have in England friends and property, in France a treasure. If your heart tells you so, I offer them to you. That is what I came here for."

However firm was his look, he could not this time support the look of Aramis. He allowed, therefore, his eye to stray upon Porthos—like the sword which yields to too powerful a pressure, and seeks another road.

"At all events," said the bishop, "you have assumed a singular traveling costume, old friend."

"Frightful! I know it is. You may understand why I would not travel as a cavalier or a noble; since I became rich, I am miserly."

"And you say, then, you came to Belle-Isle?" said Aramis, without transition.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan; "I knew I should find you and Porthos there."

"Find me!" cried Aramis. "Me! for the last year past I have not once crossed the sea."

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "I should never have supposed you such a housekeeper."

"Ah, dear friend, I must tell you that I am no longer the Aramis of former times. Riding on horseback is unpleasant to me; the sea fatigues me. I am a poor, ailing priest, always complaining, always grumbling, and inclined to the austerities which appear to accord with old age,—preliminary parleyings with death. I linger, my dear D'Artagnan, I linger."

"Well, that is all the better, my friend, for we shall probably be neighbors soon."

"Bah!" said Aramis, with a degree of surprise he did not even seek to dissemble. "You, my neighbor!"

"*Mordoux!* yes."

"How so?"

"I am about to purchase some very profitable salt mines, which are situated between Pirial and Croisio. Imagine, my friend, a clear profit of twelve per cent. Never any deficiency, never any idle expenses; the ocean, faithful and regular, brings every twelve hours its contingency to my coffers. I am the first Parisian who has dreamt of such a speculation. Do not say anything about it, I beg of you, and in a short time we will communicate on the matter. I am to have three leagues of country for thirty thousand livres."

Aramis darted a look at Porthos, as if to ask if all this were true, if some snare were not concealed beneath this outward indifference. But soon, as if ashamed of having consulted this poor auxiliary, he collected all his forces for a fresh assault and new defense. "I heard that you had had some difference with the court, but that you had

come out of it as you know how to get through everything, D'Artagnan, with the honors of war."

"I!" said the musketeer, with a burst of laughter that did not conceal his embarrassment: for, from these words, Aramis was not unlikely to be acquainted with his last relations with the king. "I! Oh, tell me all about that, pray, Aramis?"

"Yes, it was related to me, a poor bishop, lost in the middle of the *Landes*, that the king had taken you as the confidant of his amours."

"With whom?"

"With Mademoiselle de Mancini."

D'Artagnan breathed freely again. "Ah! I don't say no to that," replied he.

"It appears that the king took you, one morning, over the bridge of Blois to talk with his lady-love."

"That's true," said D'Artagnan. "And you know that, do you? Well, then, you must know that the same day I gave in my resignation!"

"What, sincerely?"

"Nothing more so."

"It was after that, then, that you went to the Comte de la Fère's?"

"Yes."

"Afterwards to me?"

"Yes."

"And then Porthos?"

"Yes."

"Was it in order to pay us a simple visit?"

"No, I did not know you were engaged, and I wished to take you with me into England."

"Yes, I understand; and then you executed alone, wonderful man as you are, what you wanted to propose to us all four. I suspected you had something to do with that famous restoration, when I learned that you had been

seen at King Charles's receptions, and that he appeared to treat you like a friend, or rather, like a person to whom he was under an obligation."

"But how the devil did you learn all that?" asked D'Artagnan, who began to fear that the investigation of Aramis had extended further than he wished.

"Dear D'Artagnan," said the prelate, "my friendship resembles, in a degree, the solicitude of that night watch whom we have in the little tower of the mole, at the extremity of the quay. That brave man, every night, lights a lantern to direct the barks that come from sea. He is concealed in his sentry-box, and the fishermen do not see him; but he follows them with interest; he divines them: he calls them; he attracts them into the way to the port. I resemble this watcher: from time to time some news reaches me, and recalls to my remembrance all those I loved. Then I follow the friends of old days over the stormy ocean of the world, I, a poor watcher, to whom God has kindly given the shelter of a sentry-box."

"Well, what did I do when I came from England?"

"Ah! there," replied Aramis, "you get beyond my depth. I know nothing of you since your return. D'Artagnan, my eyes are dim. I regretted you did not think of me. I wept over your forgetfulness. I was wrong. I see you again, and it is a festival, a great festival, I assure you, solemnly! How is Athos?"

"Very well, thank you."

"And our young pupil, Râoul?"

"He seems to have inherited the skill of his father. Athos, and the strength of his tutor, Porthos."

"And on what occasion have you been able to judge of that?"

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* on the eve of my departure from Paris."

"Indeed! tell me all about it!"

"Yes; there was an execution at the Grève, and in

consequence of that execution, a riot. We happened, by accident, to be in the riot; and in this riot we were obliged to have recourse to our swords. And he did wonders."

"Bah! what did he do?"

"Why, in the first place, he threw a man out of the window, as he would have flung a sack full of flock."

"Come, that's pretty well," said Porthos.

"Then he drew, and cut and thrust away, as we fellows used to do in the good old times."

"And what was the cause of this riot?" said Porthos.

D'Artagnan remarked upon the face of Aramis a complete indifference to this question of Porthos. "Why," said he, fixing his eyes upon Aramis, "on account of two farmers of the revenues, friends of M. Fouquet, whom the king forced to disgorge their plunder, and then hanged them."

A scarcely perceptible contraction of the prelate's brow showed that he had heard D'Artagnan's reply. "Oh, oh!" said Porthos; "and what were the names of these friends of M. Fouquet?"

"MM. d'Eymeris and Lyodot," said D'Artagnan. "Do you know those names, Aramis?"

"No," said the prelate, disdainfully; "they sound like the names of financiers."

"Exactly; so they were."

"Oh! M. Fouquet allows his friends to be hanged. then," said Porthos.

"And why not?" said Aramis. "Why, it seems to me——"

"If these culprits were hanged, it was by order of the king. Now M. Fouquet, although superintendent of the finances, has not, I believe, the right of life and death."

"That may be," said Porthos; "but in the place of M. Fouquet——"

Aramis was afraid Porthos was about to say something awkward, so interrupted him. "Come, D'Artagnan," said he; "this is quite enough about other people, let us talk a little about you."

"Of me you know all that I can tell you. On the contrary, let me hear a little about you, Aramis."

"I have told you, my friend. There is nothing of Aramis left in me."

"Nor of the Abbé d'Herblay even?"

"No, not even of him. You see a man whom Providence has taken by the hand, whom he has conducted to a position that he could never have dared even to hope for."

"Providence?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"Well, that is strange! I was told it was M. Fouquet."

"Who told you that?" cried Aramis, without being able, with all the power of his will, to prevent the color rising to his cheeks.

"*Ma foi!* why, Bazin?"

"The fool!"

"I do not say he is a man of genius, it is true; but he told me so; and after him, I repeat it to you."

"I have never seen M. Fouquet," replied Aramis, with a look as pure and calm as that of a virgin who has never told a lie.

"Well, but if you had seen him and known him, there is no harm in that," replied D'Artagnan. "M. Fouquet is a very good sort of a man."

"Humph!"

"A great politician." Aramis made a gesture of indifference.

"An all-powerful minister."

"I only hold to the king and the pope."

"*Dame!* listen then," said D'Artagnan, in the most

natural tone imaginable. "I said that because everybody here swears by M. Fouquet. The plain is M. Fouquet's; the salt-mines I am about to buy are M. Fouquet's; the island in which Porthos studies topography is M. Fouquet's; the garrison is M. Fouquet's; the galleys are M. Fouquet's. I confess, then, that nothing would have surprised me in your enfeoffment, or rather in that of your diocese, to M. Fouquet. He is a different master from the king, that is all; but quite as powerful as Louis."

"Thank God! I am not vassal to anybody; I belong to nobody, and am entirely my own master," replied Aramis, who, during this conversation, followed with his eye every gesture of D'Artagnan, every glance of Porthos. But D'Artagnan was impassible and Porthos motionless; the thrusts aimed so skillfully were parried by an able adversary; not one hit the mark. Nevertheless, both began to feel the fatigue of such a contest, and the announcement of supper was well received by everybody. Supper changed the course of conversation. Besides, they felt that, upon their guard as each one had been, they could neither of them boast of having the advantage. Porthos had understood nothing of what had been meant. He had held himself motionless, because Aramis had made him a sign not to stir. Supper, for him, was nothing but supper; but that was quite enough for Porthos. The supper, then, went off very well. D'Artagnan was in high spirits. Aramis exceeded himself in kind affability. Porthos ate like old Pelops. Their talk was of war, finance, the arts, and love. Aramis played astonishment at every word of politics D'Artagnan risked. This long series of surprises increased the mistrust of D'Artagnan, as the eternal indifference of D'Artagnan provoked the suspicions of Aramis. At length D'Artagnan, designedly, uttered the name of Colbert: he had reserved that stroke for the last.

"Who is this Colbert?" asked the bishop.

"Oh! come," said D'Artagnan to himself, "that is too strong! We must be careful, *mordieux!* we must be careful."

And he then gave Aramis all the information respecting M. Colbert he could desire. The supper, or rather, the conversation, was prolonged till one o'clock in the morning between D'Artagnan and Aramis. At ten o'clock precisely, Porthos had fallen asleep in his chair and snored like an organ. At midnight he woke up and they sent him to bed. "Hum!" said he, "I was near falling asleep; but that was all very interesting you were talking about."

At one o'clock Aramis conducted D'Artagnan to the chamber destined for him, which was the best in the episcopal residence. Two servants were placed at his command. "To-morrow, at eight o'clock," said he, taking leave of D'Artagnan, "we will take, if agreeable to you, a ride on horseback with Porthos."

"At eight o'clock!" said D'Artagnan; "so late?"

"You know that I require seven hours' sleep," said Aramis.

"That is true."

"Good-night, dear friend!" And he embraced the musketeer cordially.

D'Artagnan allowed him to depart; then, as soon as the door was closed, "Good!" cried he, "at five o'clock I will be on foot."

This determination being made, he went to bed and quietly "put two and two together," as people say.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH PORTHOS BEGINS TO BE SORRY FOR HAVING COME
WITH D'ARTAGNAN.

SCARCELY had D'Artagnan extinguished his taper, when Aramis, who had watched through his curtains the last glimmer of light in his friend's apartment, traversed the corridor on tiptoe, and went to Porthos's room. The giant who had been in bed nearly an hour and a half, lay grandly stretched out on the down bed. He was in that happy calm of the first sleep, which, with Porthos, resisted the noise of bells or the report of cannon; his head swam in that soft oscillation which reminds us of the soothing movement of a ship. In a moment Porthos would have begun to dream. The door of the chamber opened softly under the delicate pressure of the hand of Aramis. The bishop approached the sleeper. A thick carpet deadened the sound of his steps, besides which Porthos snored in a manner to drown all noise. He laid one hand on his shoulder—"Rouse," said he, "wake up, my dear Porthos." The voice of Aramis was soft and kind, but it conveyed more than a notice,—it conveyed an order. His hand was light, but it indicated a danger. Porthos heard the voice and felt the hand of Aramis, even in the depth of his sleep. He started up. "Who goes there?" cried he, in his giant's voice.

"Hush! hush! It is I," said Aramis.

"You, my friend? And what the devil do you wake me for?"

"To tell you that you must set off directly."

"Set off?"

"Yes."

"Where for?"

"For Paris."

Porthos bounded up in his bed, and then sank back again, fixing his great eyes in agitation upon Aramis.

"For Paris?"

"Yes."

"A hundred leagues?" said he.

"A hundred and four," replied the bishop.

"Oh! *mon Dieu!*" sighed Porthos, lying down again, like children who contend with their *bonne* to gain an hour or two more sleep.

"Thirty hours' riding," said Aramis, firmly. "You know there are good relays."

Porthos pushed out one leg, allowing a groan to escape him.

"Come, come! my friend," insisted the prelate with a sort of impatience.

Porthos drew the other leg out of the bed. "And is it absolutely necessary that I should go, at once?"

"Urgently necessary."

Porthos got upon his feet, and began to shake both walls and floors with his steps of a marble statue.

"Hush! hush! for the love of Heaven, my dear Porthos!" said Aramis, "you will wake somebody."

"Ah! that's true," replied Porthos, in a voice of thunder, "I forgot that; but be satisfied, I am on guard." And so saying, he let fall a belt loaded with his sword and pistols, and a purse, from which the crowns escaped with a vibrating and prolonged noise. This noise made the blood of Aramis boil, whilst it drew from Porthos a formidable burst of laughter. "How droll that is!" said he, in the same voice.

"Not so loud, Porthos, not so loud."

"True, true!" and he lowered his voice a half-note.

"I was going to say," continued Porthos, "that it is droll that we are never so slow as when we are in a hurry, and never make so much noise as when we wish to be silent."

"Yes, that is true; but let us give the proverb the lie, Porthos; let us make haste, and hold our tongue."

"You see I am doing my best," said Porthos, putting on his *haut de chausses*.

"Very well."

"This is something in haste?"

"It is more than that, it is serious, Porthos."

"Oh, oh!"

"D'Artagnan has questioned you, has he not?"

"Questioned me?"

"Yes, at Belle-Isle?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Are you sure of that, Porthos?"

"*Parbleu!*"

"It is impossible. Recollect yourself."

"He asked me what I was doing, and I told him—studying topography. I would have made use of another word which you employed one day."

"'Castrametation'?"

"Yes, that's it; but I never could recollect it."

"All the better. What more did he ask you?"

"Who M. Gétard was."

"Next?"

"Who M. Jupenet was."

"He did not happen to see our plan of fortifications, did he?"

"Yes."

"The devil he did!"

"But don't be alarmed, I had rubbed out your writing with India-rubber. It was impossible for him to suppose you had given me any advice in those works."

"Ay ; but our friend has phenomenally keen eyes."

"What are you afraid of?"

"I fear that everything is discovered, Porthos ; the matter, is, then, to prevent a great misfortune. I have given orders to my people to close all the gates and doors. D'Artagnan will not be able to get out before daybreak. Your horse is ready saddled ; you will gain the first relay ; by five o'clock in the morning, you will have traversed fifteen leagues. Come !"

Aramis then assisted Porthos to dress, piece by piece, with as much celerity as the most skillful *valet de chambre* could have done. Porthos, half stupefied, let him do as he liked, and confounded himself in excuses. When he was ready, Aramis took him by the hand, and led him, making him place his foot with precaution on every step of the stairs, preventing him running against door-frames, turning him this way and that, as if Aramis had been the giant and Porthos the dwarf. Soul set fire to and animated matter. A horse was waiting, ready saddled, in the courtyard. Porthos mounted. Then Aramis himself took the horse by the bridle, and led him over some dung spread in the yard, with the evident intention of suppressing noise. He, at the same time, held tight the horse's nose, to prevent him neighing. When arrived at the outward gate, drawing Porthos towards him, who was going off without even asking him what for : "Now, friend Porthos, now ; without drawing bridle, till you get to Paris," whispered he in his ears ; "eat on horseback, drink on horseback, sleep on horseback, but lose not a minute."

"That's enough ; I will not stop."

"This letter to M. Fouquet ; cost what it may, he must have it to-morrow before mid-day."

"He shall."

"And do not forget *one* thing, my friend."

"What is that?"

"That you are riding out on a hunt for your *brevet* of *duc* and peer."

"Oh! oh!" said Porthos, with his eyes sparkling; "I will do it in twenty-four hours, in that case."

"Try."

"Then let go the bridle—and forward, Goliath!"

Aramis did let go, not the bridle, but the horse's nose. Porthos released his hand, clapped spurs to his horse, which set off at a gallop. As long as he could distinguish Porthos through the darkness, Aramis followed him with his eyes: when he was completely out of sight, he re-entered the yard. Nothing had stirred in D'Artagnan's apartment. The *valet* placed on watch at the door had neither seen any light, nor heard any noise. Aramis closed his door carefully, sent the lackey to bed, and quickly sought his own. D'Artagnan really suspected nothing; therefore thought he had gained everything, when he awoke in the morning, about half-past four. He ran to the window in his shirt. The window looked out upon the court. Day was dawning. The court was deserted; the fowls, even, had not left their roosts. Not a servant appeared. Every door was closed.

"Good! all is still," said D'Artagnan to himself. "Never mind: I am up first in the house. Let us dress; that will be so much done." And D'Artagnan dressed himself. But, this time, he endeavored not to give to the costume of M. Agnan that *bourgeoise* and almost ecclesiastical rigidity he had affected before; he managed, by drawing his belt tighter, by buttoning his clothes in a different fashion, and by putting on his hat a little on one side, to restore to his person a little of that military character, the absence of which had surprised Aramis. This being done, he made free, or affected to make free with his host, and entered his chamber without ceremony. Aramis was asleep or feigned to be so. A large book lay open upon

his night-desk, a wax-light was still burning in its silver sconce. This was more than enough to prove to D'Artagnan the quiescence of the prelate's night, and the good intentions of his waking. The musketeer did to the bishop precisely as the bishop had done to Porthos—he tapped him on the shoulder. Evidently Aramis pretended to sleep; for, instead of waking suddenly, he who slept so lightly required a repetition of the summons.

"Ah! ah! is that you?" said he, stretching his arms. "What an agreeable surprise! *Ma foi!* Sleep had made me forget I had the happiness to possess you. What o'clock is it?"

"I do not know," said D'Artagnan, a little embarrassed. "Early, I believe. But, you know, that devil of a habit of waking with the day, sticks to me still."

"Do you wish that we should go out so soon?" asked Aramis. "It appears to me to be very early."

"Just as you like."

"I thought we had agreed not to get on horseback before eight."

"Possibly; but I had so great a wish to see you, that I said to myself, the sooner the better."

"And my seven hours' sleep!" said Aramis: "take care; I had reckoned upon them, and what I lose of them I must make up."

"But it seems to me that, formerly, you were less of a sleeper than that, dear friend; your blood was alive, and you were never to be found in bed."

"And it is exactly on account of what you tell me, that I am so fond of being there now."

"Then you confess, that it is not for the sake of sleeping, that you have put me off till eight o'clock."

"I have been afraid you would laugh at me, if I told you the truth."

"Tell me, notwithstanding."

"Well, from six to eight, I am accustomed to perform my devotions."

"Your devotions?"

"Yes."

"I did not believe a bishop's exercises were so severe."

"A bishop, my friend, must sacrifice more to appearance than a simple cleric."

"*Mordoux!* Aramis, that is a word which reconciles me with your greatness. To appearances! That is a musketeer's word, in good truth! *Vivent les apparences*, Aramis!"

"Instead of felicitating me upon it, pardon me, D'Artagnan. It is a very mundane word which I had allowed to escape me."

"Must I leave you, then?"

"I want time to collect my thoughts, my friend, and for my usual prayers."

"Well I leave you to them; but on account of that poor pagan, D'Artagnan, abridge them for once, I beg; I thirst for speech with you."

"Well, D'Artagnan, I promise you that within an hour and a half——"

"An hour and a half of devotions! Ah! my friend, be as reasonable with me as you can. Let me have the best bargain possible."

Aramis began to laugh.

"Still agreeable, still young, still gay," said he. "You have come into my diocese to set me quarreling with grace."

"Bah!"

"And you know well that I was never able to resist your seductions; you will cost me my salvation, D'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan bit his lips.

"Well," said he, "I will take the sin on my own head, favor me with one simple Christian sign of the cross, favor me with one pater, and we will part."

"Hush!" said Aramis, "we are already no longer alone, I hear strangers coming up."

"Well, dismiss them."

"Impossible; I made an appointment with them yesterday; it is the principal of the college of the Jesuits, and the superior of the Dominicans."

"Your staff? Well, so be it!"

"What are you going to do?"

"I will go and wake Porthos, and remain in his company till you have finished the conference."

Aramis did not stir, his brow remained unbent, he betrayed himself by no gesture or word; "Go," said he, as D'Artagnan advanced to the door.

"*A propos*, do you know where Porthos sleeps?"

"No, but I will inquire."

"Take the corridor, and open the second door on the left."

"Thank you! *au revoir*." And D'Artagnan departed in the direction pointed out by Aramis.

Ten minutes had not passed away when he came back. He found Aramis seated between the superior of the Dominicans and the principal of the college of the Jesuits, exactly in the same situation as he had found him formerly in the auberge at Crève-cœur. This company did not at all terrify the musketeer.

"What is it?" said Aramis, quietly. "You have apparently, something to say to me, my friend."

"It is," replied D'Artagnan, fixing his eyes upon Aramis, "it is that Porthos is not in his apartment."

"Indeed," said Aramis, calmly; "are you sure?"

"*Pardieu!* I came from his chamber."

"Where can he be, then?"

"That is what I am asking *you*."

"And have not you inquired?"

"Yes, I have."

"And what answer did you get?"

"That Porthos, often walking out in a morning, without saying anything, had probably gone out."

"What did you do, then?"

"I went to the stables," replied D'Artagnan, carelessly.

"What to do?"

"To see if Porthos had departed on horseback."

"And?" interrogated the bishop.

"Well, there is a horse missing, stall No. 3, Goliath."

All this dialogue, it may be easily understood, was not exempt from a certain affectation on the part of the musketeer, and a perfect complaisance on the part of Aramis.

"Oh! I guess how it is," said Aramis, after having considered for a moment, "Porthos is gone out to give us a surprise."

"A surprise?"

"Yes; the canal which goes from Vannes to the sea abounds in teal and snipes; that is Porthos's favorite sport, and he will bring us back a dozen for breakfast."

"Do you think so?" said D'Artagnan.

"I am sure of it. Where else can he be? I would lay a wager he took a gun with him."

"Well, that is possible," said D'Artagnan.

"Do one thing, my friend. Get on horseback, and join him."

"You are right," said D'Artagnan, "I will."

"Shall I go with you?"

"No, thank you; Porthos is a rather remarkable man: I will inquire as I go along."

"Will you take an arquebuse?"

"Thank you."

"Order what horse you like to be saddled."

"The one I rode yesterday, on coming from Belle-Isle."

"So be it: use the horse as your own."

Aramis rang, and gave orders to have the horse M. d'Artagnan had chosen saddled.

D'Artagnan followed the servant charged with the execution of this order. When arrived at the door, the servant drew on one side to allow M. d'Artagnan to pass; and at that moment he caught the eye of his master. A knitting of the brow gave the intelligent spy to understand that all should be given to D'Artagnan he wished. D'Artagnan got into the saddle, and Aramis heard the steps of his horse on the pavement. An instant after, the servant returned.

"Well?" asked the bishop.

"Monseigneur, he has followed the course of the canal, and is going towards the sea," said the servant.

"Very well!" said Aramis.

In fact, D'Artagnan, dismissing all suspicion, hastened towards the ocean, constantly hoping to see in the *Landes*, or on the beach, the colossal profile of Porthos. He persisted in fancying he could trace a horse's steps in every puddle. Sometimes he imagined he heard the report of a gun. This illusion lasted three hours; during two of which he went forward in search of his friend—in the last he returned to the house.

"We must have crossed," said he, "and I shall find them waiting for me at table."

D'Artagnan was mistaken. He no more found Porthos at the palace than he had found him on the sea-shore. Aramis was waiting for him at the top of the stairs, looking very much concerned.

"Did my people not find you, my dear D'Artagnan?" cried he, as soon as he caught sight of the musketeer.

"No; did you send any one after me?"

"I am deeply concerned, my friend, deeply, to have in-

duced you to make such a useless search ; but, about seven o'clock, the almoner of Saint-Paterne came here. He had met Du Vallon, who was going away, and who, being unwilling to disturb anybody at the palace, had charged him to tell me that, fearing M. Gétard would play him some ill turn in his absence, he was going to take advantage of the morning tide to make a tour to Belle-Isle."

"But tell me, Goliath has not crossed the four leagues of sea, I should think."

"There are full six," said Aramis.

"That makes it less probable still."

"Therefore, my friend," said Aramis, with one of his blindest smiles, "Goliath is in the stable, well pleased, I will answer for it, that Porthos is no longer on his back." In fact, the horse had been brought back from the relay by the direction of the prelate, from whom no detail escaped. D'Artagnan appeared as well satisfied as possible with the explanation. He entered upon a part of dissimulation which agreed perfectly with the suspicions that arose more and more strongly in his mind. He breakfasted between the Jesuit and Aramis, having the Dominican in front of him, and smiling particularly at the Dominican, whose jolly fat face pleased him much. The repast was long and sumptuous ; excellent Spanish wine, fine Morbihan oysters, exquisite fish from the mouth of the Loire, enormous prawns from Paimbœuf, and delicious game from the moors, constituted the principal part of it. D'Artagnan ate much, and drank but little. Aramis drank nothing, unless it was water. After the repast,

"You offered me an arquebuse," said D'Artagnan.

"I did."

"Lend it me, then."

"Are you going shooting?"

"Whilst waiting for Porthos, it is the best thing I can do, I think."

"Take which you like from the trophy."

"Will you not come with me?"

"I would with great pleasure; but, alas! my friend, sporting is forbidden to bishops."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "I did not know that."

"Besides," continued Aramis, "I shall be busy till mid-day."

"I shall go alone, then?" said D'Artagnan.

"I am sorry to say you must; but come back to dinner."

"*Pardieu!* the eating at your house is too good to make me think of not coming back." And thereupon D'Artagnan quitted his host, bowed to the guests, and took his arquebuse; but, instead of shooting, went straight to the little port of Vannes. He looked in vain to observe if anybody saw him; he could discern neither thing nor person. He engaged a little fishing-boat for twenty-five livres, and set off at half-past eleven, convinced that he had not been followed; and that was true, he had not been followed; only a Jesuit brother, placed in the top of the steeple of his church, had not, since the morning, by the help of an excellent glass, lost sight of one of his steps. At three-quarters past eleven, Aramis was informed that D'Artagnan was sailing towards Belle-Isle. The voyage was rapid; a good north north-east wind drove him towards the isle. As he approached, his eyes were constantly fixed upon the coast. He looked to see if, upon the shore or upon the fortifications, the brilliant dress and vast stature of Porthos should stand out against a slightly clouded sky; but his search was vain. He landed without having seen anything; and learnt from the first soldier interrogated by him, that M. du Vallon had not yet returned from Vannes. Then, without losing an instant, D'Artagnan ordered his little bark to put its head towards Sarzeau. We know that the wind changes with the different hours of the day. The breeze had veered from the north north-east

to the south-east; the wind, then, was almost as good for the return to Sarzeau, as it had been for the voyage to Belle-Isle. In three hours D'Artagnan had touched the continent; two hours more sufficed for his ride to Vannes. In spite of the rapidity of his passage, what D'Artagnan endured of impatience and anger during that short passage, the deck alone of the vessel, upon which he stamped backwards and forwards for three hours, could testify. He made but one bound from the quay whereon he landed to the episcopal palace. He thought to terrify Aramis by the promptitude of his return; he wished to reproach him with his duplicity, and yet with reserve; but with sufficient spirit, nevertheless, to make him feel all the consequences of it, and force from him a part of his secret. He hoped, in short—thanks to that heat of expression which is to *secrets* what the charge with the bayonet is to redoubts—to bring the mysterious Aramis to some manifestation or other. But he found, in the vestibule of the palace, the *valet de chambre*, who closed the passage, while smiling upon him with a stupid air.

"Monseigneur?" cried D'Artagnan, endeavoring to put him aside with his hand. Moved for an instant, the valet resumed his station.

"Monseigneur?" said he.

"Yes, to be sure; do you not know me, *imbécile*?"

"Yes; you are the Chevalier d'Artagnan."

"Then let me pass."

"It is of no use."

"Why of no use?"

"Because His Greatness is not at home."

"What! His Greatness is not at home? where is he then?"

"Gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes."

"Whither?"

"I don't know; but, perhaps he tells monsieur le chevalier."

"And how? where? in what fashion?"

"In this letter, which he gave me for monsieur le chevalier." And the *valet de chambre* drew a letter from his pocket.

"Give it me, then, you rascal," said D'Artagnan, snatching it from his hand. "Oh, yes," continued he, at the first line, "yes, I understand;" and he read:—

"DEAR FRIEND,—An affair of the most urgent nature calls me to a distant parish of my diocese. I hoped to see you again before I set out; but I lose that hope in thinking that you are going, no doubt, to remain two or three days at Belle-Isle, with our dear Porthos. Amuse yourself as well as you can; but do not attempt to hold out against him at table. This is a counsel I might have given even to Athos, in his most brilliant and best days. Adieu, dear friend; believe that I regret greatly not having better, and for a longer time, profited by your excellent company."

"*Mordieux!*" cried D'Artagnan. "I am tricked. Ah! blockhead, brute, triple fool that I am! But those laugh best who laugh last. Oh, duped, duped like a monkey, cheated with an empty nutshell!" And with a hearty blow bestowed upon the nose of the smirking *valet de chambre*, he made all haste out of the episcopal palace. Furet, however good a trotter, was not equal to present circumstances. D'Artagnan, therefore took the post, and chose a horse, which he soon caused to demonstrate, with good spurs and a light hand, that deer are not the swiftest animals in nature.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN MAKES ALL SPEED, PORTHOS SNORES,
AND ARAMIS COUNSELS.

FROM thirty to thirty-five hours after the events we have just related, as M. Fouquet, according to his custom, having interdicted his door, was working in the cabinet of his house at Saint Mandé, with which we are already acquainted, a carriage, drawn by four horses steaming with sweat, entered the court at full gallop. This carriage was, probably, expected; for three or four lackeys hastened to the door, which they opened. Whilst M. Fouquet rose from his bureau and ran to the window, a man got painfully out of the carriage, descending with difficulty the three steps of the door, leaning upon the shoulders of the lackeys. He had scarcely uttered his name, when the *valet* upon whom he was not leaning, sprang up the *perron*, and disappeared in the vestibule. This man went to inform his master; but he had no occasion to knock at the door: Fouquet was standing on the threshold.

"Monseigneur, the Bishop of Vannes," said he.

"Very well!" replied his master.

Then, leaning over the banister of the staircase, of which Aramis was beginning to ascend the first steps,—

"Ah, dear friend!" said he, "you, so soon!"

"Yes; I, myself, monsieur! but bruised, battered, as you see."

"Oh! my poor friend," said Fouquet, presenting him his arm, on which Aramis leant, whilst the servants drew back respectfully.

"Bah!" replied Aramis, "it is nothing, since I am here; the principal thing was that I should *get* here, and here I am."

"Speak quickly," said Fouquet, closing the door of the cabinet behind Aramis and himself.

"Are we alone?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"No one observes us?—no one can hear us?"

"Be satisfied; nobody."

"Is M. du Vallon arrived?"

"Yes."

"And you have received my letter?"

"Yes. The affair is serious, apparently, since it necessitates your attendance in Paris, at a moment when your presence was so urgent elsewhere."

"You are right, it could not be more serious."

"Thank you! thank you! What is it about? But, for God's sake! before anything else, take time to breathe, dear friend. You are so pale, you frighten me."

"I am really in great pain. But, for Heaven's sake, think nothing about me. Did M. du Vallon tell you nothing, when he delivered the letter to you?"

"No; I heard a great noise; I went to the window; I saw at the foot of the *perron* a sort of horseman of marble; I went down, he held the letter out to me, and his horse fell down dead."

"But he?"

"He fell with the horse; he was lifted, and carried to an apartment. Having read the letter, I went up to him, in hopes of obtaining more ample information; but he was asleep, and, after such a fashion, that it was impossible to wake him. I took pity on him; I gave orders

that his boots should be cut from off his legs, and that he should be left quite undisturbed."

"So far well; now, this is the question in hand, monseigneur. You have seen M. d'Artagnan in Paris, have you not?"

"*Certes*, and think him a man of intelligence, and even a man of heart; although he did bring about the death of our dear friends, Lyodot and D'Eymeris."

"Alas! yes, I heard of that. At Tours I met the courier who was bringing me the letter from Gourville, and the dispatches from Pellisson. Have you seriously reflected on that event, monsieur?"

"Yes."

"And in it you perceived a direct attack upon your sovereignty?"

"And do you believe it to be so?"

"Oh, yes, I think so."

"Well, I must confess, that sad idea occurred to me likewise."

"Do not blind yourself, monsieur, in the name of Heaven! Listen attentively to me,—I return to D'Artagnan."

"I am all attention."

"Under what circumstances did you see him?"

"He came here for money."

"With what kind of order?"

"With an order from the king."

"Direct?"

"Signed by his majesty."

"There, then! Well, D'Artagnan has been to Belle-Isle; he was disguised; he came in the character of some sort of an *intendant*, charged by his master to purchase salt-mines. Now, D'Artagnan has no other master but the king; he came, then, sent by the king. He saw Porthos."

"Who is Porthos?"

"I beg your pardon, I made a mistake. He saw M. du Vallon at Belle-Isle ; and he knows, as well as you and I do, that Belle-Isle is fortified."

"And you think that the king sent him there?" said Fouquet, pensively.

"I certainly do."

"And D'Artagnan, in the hands of the king, is a dangerous instrument?"

"The most dangerous imaginable."

"Then I formed a correct opinion of him at the first glance."

"How so?"

"I wished to attach him to myself."

"If you judged him to be the bravest, the most acute, and the most adroit man in France, you judged correctly."

"He must be had then, at any price."

"D'Artagnan?"

"Is not that your opinion?"

"It may be my opinion, but you will never get him."

"Why?"

"Because we have allowed the time to go by. He was dissatisfied with the court, we should have profited by that ; since that, he has passed into England ; there he powerfully assisted in the restoration, there he gained a fortune, and, after all, he returned to the service of the king. Well, if he has returned to the service of the king, it is because he is well paid in that service."

"We will pay him even better, that is all."

"Oh ! monsieur, excuse me ; D'Artagnan has a high respect for his word, and where that is once engaged he keeps it."

"What do you conclude, then?" said Fouquet, with great inquietude.

"At present, the principal thing is to parry a dangerous blow."

"And how is it to be parried?"

"Listen."

"But D'Artagnan will come and render an account to the king of his mission."

"Oh, we have time enough to think about that."

"How so? You are much in advance of him, I presume?"

"Nearly ten hours."

"Well, in ten hours——"

Aramis shook his pale head. "Look at these clouds which flit across the heavens; at these swallows which cut the air. D'Artagnan moves more quickly than the clouds or the birds; D'Artagnan is the wind which carries them."

"A strange man!"

"I tell you, he is superhuman, monsieur. He is of my own age, and I have known him these five-and-thirty years."

"Well?"

"Well, listen to my calculation, monsieur. I sent M. du Vallon off to you two hours after midnight. M. du Vallon was eight hours in advance of me; when did M. du Vallon arrive?"

"About four hours ago."

"You see, then, that I gained four upon him; and yet Porthos is a staunch horseman, and he has left on the road eight dead horses, whose bodies I came to successively. I rode post fifty leagues; but I have the gout, the gravel, and what else I know not; so that fatigue kills me. I was obliged to dismount at Tours; since that, rolling along in a carriage, half-dead, sometimes overturned, drawn upon the sides, and sometimes on the back of the carriage, always with four spirited horses at full gallop, I have arrived—arrived, gaining four hours upon Porthos; but, see you, D'Artagnan does not weigh three hundred-weight, as

Porthos does; D'Artagnan has not the gout and gravel, as I have; he is not a horseman, he is a centaur. D'Artagnan, look you, set out for Belle-Isle when I set out for Paris; and D'Artagnan, notwithstanding my ten hours' advance, D'Artagnan will arrive within two hours after me."

"But, then, accidents?"

"He never meets with accident."

"Horses may fail him."

"He will run as fast as a horse."

"Good God! what a man!"

"Yes, he is a man whom I love and admire. I love him because he is good, great, and loyal; I admire him because he represents in my eyes the culminating point of human power; but, whilst loving and admiring him, I fear him, and am on my guard against him. Now then, I resume, monsieur; in two hours D'Artagnan will be here; be beforehand with him. Go to the Louvre, and see the king before he sees D'Artagnan."

"What shall I say to the king?"

"Nothing; give him Belle-Isle."

"Oh! Monsieur d'Herblay! Monsieur d'Herblay," cried Fouquet, "what projects crushed all at once!"

"After one project that has failed, there is always another project that may lead to fortune; we should never despair. Go, monsieur, and go at once."

"But that garrison, so carefully chosen, the king will change it directly."

"That garrison, monsieur, was the king's when it entered Belle-Isle; it is yours now; it is the same with all garrisons after a fortnight's occupation. Let things go on, monsieur. Do you see any inconvenience in having an army at the end of a year, instead of two regiments? Do you not see that your garrison of to-day will make you partisans at La Rochelle, Nantes, Bordeaux, Toulouse—in

short, wherever they may be sent to? Go to the king, monsieur; go; time flies, and D'Artagnan, while we are losing time, is flying, like an arrow, along the high-road."

"Monsieur d'Herblay, you know that each word from you is a germ which fructifies in my thoughts. I will go to the Louvre."

"Instantly, will you not?"

"I only ask time to change my dress."

"Remember that D'Artagnan has no need to pass through St. Mandé; but will go straight to the Louvre; that is cutting off an hour from the advantage that yet remains to us."

"D'Artagnan may have everything except my English horses. I shall be at the Louvre in twenty-five minutes." And, without losing a second, Fouquet gave orders for his departure.

Aramis had only time to say to him, "Return as quickly as you go: for I shall await you impatiently."

Five minutes after the superintendent was flying along the road to Paris. During this time, Aramis desired to be shown the chamber in which Porthos was sleeping. At the door of Fouquet's cabinet he was folded in the arms of Pellisson, who had just heard of his arrival, and had left his office to see him. Aramis received, with that friendly dignity which he knew so well how to assume, these caresses, respectful as earnest: but all at once stopping on the landing-place, "What is that I hear up yonder?"

There was, in fact, a hoarse, growling kind of noise, like the roar of a hungry tiger, or an impatient lion. "Oh, that is nothing," said Pellisson, smiling.

"Well; but——"

"It is M. du Vallon snoring."

"Ah! true," said Aramis: "I had forgotten. No one but he is capable of making such a noise. Allow me, Pellisson, to inquire if he wants anything."

“And you will permit me to accompany you?”

“Oh, certainly;” and both entered the chamber. Porthos was stretched upon the bed; his face was violet rather than red; his eyes were swelled; his mouth was wide open. The roaring which escaped from the deep cavities of his chest made the glass of the windows vibrate. To those developed and clearly defined muscles starting from his face, to his hair matted with sweat, to the energetic heaving of his chin and shoulders, it was impossible to refuse a certain degree of admiration. Strength carried to this point is semi-divine. The Herculean legs and feet of Porthos had, by swelling, burst his stockings; all the strength of his huge body was converted into the rigidity of stone. Porthos moved no more than does the giant of granite which reclines upon the plains of Agrigentum. According to Pellisson's orders, his boots had been cut off, for no human power could have pulled them off. Four lackeys had tried in vain, pulling at them as they would have pulled capstans; and yet all this did not awaken him. They had hacked off his boots in fragments, and his legs had fallen back upon the bed. They then cut off the rest of his clothes, carried him to a bath, in which they let him soak a considerable time. They then put on him clean linen, and placed him in a well-warmed bed—the whole with efforts and pains which might have roused a dead man, but which did not make Porthos open an eye, or interrupt for a second the formidable diapason of his snoring. Aramis wished on his part, with his nervous nature, armed with extraordinary courage, to outbrave fatigue, and employ himself with Gourville and Pellisson, but he fainted in the chair in which he had persisted sitting. He was carried into the adjoining room, where the repose of bed soon soothed his failing brain.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH MONSIEUR FOUQUET ACTS.

IN the meantime Fouquet was hastening to the Louvre, at the best speed of his English horses. The king was at work with Colbert. All at once the king became thoughtful. The two sentences of death he had signed on mounting his throne sometimes recurred to his memory: they were two black spots which he saw with his eyes open; two spots of blood which he saw when his eyes were closed. "Monsieur," said he rather sharply, to the intendant; "it sometimes seems to me that those two men you made me condemn were not very great culprits."

"Sire, they were picked out from the herd of the farmers of the financiers, which wanted decimating."

"Picked out by whom?"

"By necessity, sire," replied Colbert, coldly.

"Necessity!—a great word," murmured the young king.

"A great goddess, sire."

"They were devoted friends of the superintendent, were they not?"

"Yes, sire; friends who would have given up their lives for Monsieur Fouquet."

"They have given them, monsieur," said the king.

"That is true;—but uselessly, by good luck,—which was not their intention."

"How much money had these men fraudulently obtained?"

"Ten millions, perhaps ; of which six have been confiscated."

"And is that money in my coffers?" said the king with a certain air of repugnance.

"It is there, sire : but this confiscation, whilst threatening M. Fouquet, has not touched him."

"You conclude, then, M. Colbert——"

"That if M. Fouquet has raised against your majesty a troop of factious rioters to extricate his friends from punishment, he will raise an army when he has in turn to extricate *himself* from punishment."

The king darted at his confidant one of those looks which resemble the livid fire of a flash of lightning, one of those looks which illuminate the darkness of the basest consciences. "I am astonished," said he, "that, thinking such things of M. Fouquet you did not come to give me your counsels thereupon."

"Counsels upon what, sire?"

"Tell me, in the first place, clearly and precisely, what you think, M. Colbert."

"Upon what subject, sire?"

"Upon the conduct of M. Fouquet."

"I think, sire, that M. Fouquet, not satisfied with attracting all the money to himself, as M. Mazarin did, and by that means depriving your majesty of one part of your power, still wishes to attract to himself all the friends of easy life and pleasure—of what idlers call poetry, and politicians, corruption. I think that, by holding the subjects of your majesty in pay, he trespasses upon the royal prerogative, and cannot, if this continues so, be long in placing your majesty among the weak and the obscure."

"How would you qualify all these projects, M. Colbert?"

"The projects of M. Fouquet, sire?"

"Yes."

"They are called crimes of *lèse majesté*."

"And what is done to criminals guilty of *lèse majesté*?"

"They are arrested, tried, and punished."

"You are quite sure that M. Fouquet has conceived the idea of the crime you impute to him."

"I can say more, sire; there is even a commencement of the execution of it."

"Well, then, I return to that which I was saying, M. Colbert."

"And you were saying, sire?"

"Give me counsel."

"Pardon me, sire; but, in the first place, I have something to add."

"Say—what?"

"An evident, palpable, material proof of treason."

"And what is that?"

"I have just learnt that M. Fouquet is fortifying Belle-Isle."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes, sire."

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly. Do you know, sire, what soldiers there are in Belle-Isle?"

"No, *ma foi*! Do you?"

"I am ignorant, likewise, sire; I should therefore propose to your majesty to send somebody to Belle-Isle?"

"Who?"

"Me, for instance."

"And what would you do at Belle-Isle?"

"Inform myself whether, after the example of the ancient feudal lords, M. Fouquet was battlementing his walls."

"And with what purpose could he do that?"

"With the purpose of defending himself some day against his king."

"But, if it be thus, M. Colbert," said Louis, "we must immediately do as you say: M. Fouquet must be arrested."

"That is impossible."

"I thought I had already told you, monsieur, that I suppressed that word in my service."

"The service of your majesty cannot prevent M. Fouquet from being surintendant-général."

"Well?"

"That, in consequence of holding that post, he has for him all the parliament, as he has all the army by his largesses, literature by his favors, and the *noblesse* by his presents."

"That is to say, then, that I can do nothing against M. Fouquet?"

"Absolutely nothing,—at least at present, sire."

"You are a sterile counselor, M. Colbert."

"Oh, no, sire; for I will not confine myself to pointing out the peril to your majesty."

"Come, then, where shall we begin to undermine this Colossus; let us see;" and his majesty began to laugh bitterly.

"He has grown great by money: kill him by money, sire."

"If I were to deprive him of his charge?"

"A bad means, sire."

"The good—the good, then?"

"Ruin him, sire, that is the way."

"But how?"

"Occasions will not be wanting; take advantage of all occasions."

"Point them out to me."

"Here is one at once. His royal highness Monsieur is about to be married: his nuptials must be magnificent. That is a good occasion for your majesty to demand a mil-

lion of M. Fouquet. M. Fouquet, who pays twenty thousand livres down when he need not pay more than five thousand, will easily find that million when your majesty demands it."

"That is all very well; I *will* demand it," said Louis.

"If your majesty will sign the *ordonnance*, I will have the money got together myself." And Colbert pushed a paper before the king, and presented a pen to him.

At that moment the usher opened the door and announced monsieur le surintendant. Louis turned pale. Colbert let the pen fall, and drew back from the king, over whom he extended his black wings like an evil spirit. The superintendent made his entrance like a man of the court, to whom a single glance was sufficient to make him appreciate the situation. That situation was not very encouraging for Fouquet, whatever might be his consciousness of strength. The small black eye of Colbert, dilated by envy, and the limpid eye of Louis XIV. inflamed by anger, signalled some pressing danger. Courtiers are, with regard to court rumors, like old soldiers, who distinguish through the blasts of wind and bluster of leaves the sound of the distant steps of an armed troop. They can, after having listened, tell pretty nearly how many men are marching, how many arms resound, how many cannons roll. Fouquet had then only to interrogate the silence which his arrival had produced: he found it big with menacing revelations. The king allowed him time enough to advance as far as the middle of the chamber. His adolescent modesty commanded this forbearance of the moment. Fouquet boldly seized the opportunity.

"Sire," said he, "I was impatient to see your majesty."

"What for?" asked Louis.

"To announce some good news to you."

Colbert, minus grandeur of person, less largeness of heart, resembled Fouquet in many points. He had the

same penetration, the same knowledge of men ; moreover, that great power of self-compression which gives to hypocrites time to reflect, and gather themselves up to take a spring. He guessed that Fouquet was going to meet the blow he was about to deal him. His eyes glittered ominously.

"What news?" asked the king. Fouquet placed a roll of papers on the table.

"Let your majesty have the goodness to cast your eyes over this work," said he. The king slowly unfolded the paper.

"Plans?" said he.

"Yes, sire."

"And what are these plans?"

"A new fortification, sire."

"Ah, ah!" said the king, "you amuse yourself with tactics and strategies then, M. Fouquet?"

"I occupy myself with everything that may be useful to the reign of your majesty," replied Fouquet.

"Beautiful descriptions!" said the king, looking at the design.

"Your majesty comprehends, without doubt," said Fouquet, bending over the paper; "here is the circle of the walls, here are the forts, there the advanced works."

"And what do I see here, monsieur?"

"The sea."

"The sea all round?"

"Yes, sire."

"And what is, then, the name of this place of which you show me the plan?"

"Sire, it is Belle-Isle-en-Mer," replied Fouquet with simplicity.

At this word, at this name, Colbert made so marked a movement, that the king turned round to enforce the necessity for reserve. Fouquet did not appear to be the

least in the world concerned by the movement of Colbert, or the king's signal.

"Monsieur," continued Louis, "you have then fortified Belle-Isle?"

"Yes, sire; and I have brought the plan and the accounts to your majesty," replied Fouquet; "I have expended sixteen hundred thousand livres in this operation."

"What to do?" replied Louis, coldly, having taken the initiative from a malicious look of the intendant.

"For an aim very easy to seize," replied Fouquet. "Your majesty was on cool terms with Great Britain."

"Yes; but since the restoration of King Charles II. I have formed an alliance with him."

"A month since, sire, your majesty has truly said; but it is more than six months since the fortifications of Belle-Isle were begun."

"Then they have become useless."

"Sire, fortifications are never useless. I fortified Belle-Isle against MM. Monk and Lambert and all those London citizens who were playing at soldiers. Belle-Isle will be ready fortified against the Dutch, against whom either England or your majesty cannot fail to make war."

The king was again silent, and looked askant at Colbert. "Belle-Isle, I believe," added Louis, "is yours, M. Fouquet?"

"No, sire."

"Whose then?"

"Your majesty's."

Colbert was seized with as much terror as if a gulf had opened beneath his feet. Louis started with admiration, either at the genius or the devotion of Fouquet.

"Explain yourself, monsieur," said he.

"Nothing more easy, sire; Belle-Isle is one of my estates; I have fortified it at my own expense. But as nothing in the world can oppose a subject making an

humble present to his king, I offer your majesty the proprietorship of the estate, of which you will leave me the usufruct. Belle-Isle, as a place of war, ought to be occupied by the king. Your majesty will be able, henceforth, to keep a safe garrison there."

Colbert felt almost sinking down upon the floor. To keep himself from falling, he was obliged to hold by the columns of the wainscoting.

"This is a piece of great skill in the art of war that you have exhibited here, monsieur," said Louis.

"Sire, the initiative did not come from me," replied Fouquet; "many officers have inspired me with it. The plans themselves have been made by one of the most distinguished engineers."

"His name?"

"M. du Vallon.

"M. du Vallon?" resumed Louis; "I do not know him. It is much to be lamented, M. Colbert," continued he, "that I do not know the names of the men of talent who do honor to my reign." And while saying these words he turned towards Colbert. The latter felt himself crushed, the sweat flowed from his brow, no word presented itself to his lips, he suffered an inexpressible martyrdom. "You will recollect that name," added Louis XIV.

Colbert bowed, but was paler than his ruffles of Flemish lace. Fouquet continued:

"The masonries are of Roman concrete; the architects amalgamated it for me after the best accounts of antiquity."

"And the cannon?" asked Louis.

"Oh! sire, that concerns your majesty; it did not become me to place cannon in my own house, unless your majesty had told me it was yours."

Louis began to float, undetermined between the hatred which this so powerful man inspired him with, and the

pity he felt for the other, so cast down, who seemed to him the counterfeit of the former. But the consciousness of his kingly duty prevailed over the feelings of the man, and he stretched out his finger to the paper."

"It must have cost you a great deal of money to carry these plans into execution," said he.

"I believe I had the honor of telling your majesty the amount?"

"Repeat it if you please, I have forgotten it."

"Sixteen hundred thousand livres."

"Sixteen hundred thousand livres! you are enormously rich, monsieur."

"It is your majesty who is rich, since Belle-Isle is yours."

"Yes, thank you; but however rich I may be, M. Fouquet——" The king stopped.

"Well, sire?" asked the superintendent.

"I foresee the moment when I shall want money."

"You, sire?—And at what moment, then?"

"To-morrow, for example."

"Will your majesty do me the honor to explain yourself?"

"My brother is going to marry the English Princess."

"Well?—sire."

"Well, I ought to give the bride a reception worthy of the granddaughter of Henry IV."

"That is but just, sire."

"Then I shall want money."

"No doubt."

"I shall want——" Louis hesitated. The sum he was going to demand was the same that he had been obliged to refuse Charles II. He turned towards Colbert, that he might give the blow.

"I shall want, to-morrow——" repeated he, looking at Colbert.

"A million," said the latter, bluntly : delighted to take his revenge.

Fouquet turned his back upon the intendant to listen to the king. He did not turn round, but waited till the king repeated, or rather murmured, "A million."

"Oh ! sire," replied Fouquet disdainfully, "a million ! What will your majesty do with a million ?"

"It appears to me, nevertheless——" said Louis XIV.

"That is not more than is spent at the nuptials of one of the most petty princes of Germany."

"Monsieur !"

"Your majesty must have two millions at least. The horses alone, would run away with five hundred thousand livres. I shall have the honor of sending your majesty sixteen hundred thousand livres this evening."

"How," said the king, "sixteen hundred thousand livres ?"

"Look, sire," replied Fouquet, without even turning towards Colbert, "I know that wants four hundred thousand livres of the two millions. But this monsieur of l'intendance" (pointing over his shoulder to Colbert, who if possible, became paler, behind him) "has in his coffers nine hundred thousand livres of mine."

The king turned round to look at Colbert.

"But——" said the latter.

"Monsieur," continued Fouquet, still speaking indirectly to Colbert, "monsieur has received, a week ago, sixteen hundred thousand livres ; he has paid a hundred thousand livres to the guards, sixty-four thousand livres to the hospitals, twenty-five thousand to the Swiss, a hundred and thirty thousand for provisions, a thousand for arms, ten thousand for accidental expenses ; I do not err, then, in reckoning upon nine hundred thousand livres that are left." Then turning towards Colbert, like a disdainful head of office towards his inferior, "Take care, mon-

sieur," said he, "that those nine hundred thousand livres be remitted to his majesty this evening, in gold."

"But," said the king, "that will make two millions five hundred thousand livres."

"Sire, the five hundred thousand livres over will serve as pocket money for his Royal Highness. You understand, Monsieur Colbert, this evening before eight o'clock."

And with these words, bowing respectfully to the king, the superintendent made his exit backwards, without honoring with a single look the envious man, whose head he had just half-shaved.

Colbert tore his ruffles to pieces in his rage, and bit his lips till they bled.

Fouquet had not passed the door of the cabinet, when an usher, pushing by him, exclaimed: "A courier from Bretagne for his majesty."

"M. d'Herblay was right," murmured Fouquet, pulling out his watch; "an hour and-fifty-five minutes. It was quite true."

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN FINISHES BY AT LENGTH PLACING HIS
HAND UPON HIS CAPTAIN'S COMMISSION.

THE reader guesses beforehand whom the usher preceded in announcing the courier from Bretagne. This messenger was easily recognized. It was D'Artagnan, his clothes dusty, his face inflamed, his hair dripping with sweat, his legs stiff; he lifted his feet painfully at every step, on which resounded the clink of his blood-stained spurs. He perceived in the doorway he was passing through the superintendent coming out. Fouquet bowed with a smile to him who, an hour before, was bringing him ruin and

death. D'Artagnan found in his goodness of heart, and in his inexhaustible vigor of body, enough presence of mind to remember the kind reception of this man; he bowed then, also, much more from benevolence and compassion, than from respect. He felt upon his lips the word which had so many times been repeated to the Duc de Guise: "Fly." But to pronounce that word would have been to betray his cause; to speak that word in the cabinet of the king, and before an usher, would have been to ruin himself gratuitously, and could save nobody. D'Artagnan then contented himself with bowing to Fouquet, and entered. At this moment the king floated between the joy the last words of Fouquet had given him, and his pleasure at the return of D'Artagnan. Without being a courtier, D'Artagnan had a glance as sure and as rapid as if he had been one. He read, on his entrance, devouring humiliation on the countenance of Colbert. He even heard the king say these words to him:—

"Ah! Monsieur Colbert; you have then nine hundred thousand livres at the intendance?" Colbert, suffocated, bowed, but made no reply. All this scene entered into the mind of D'Artagnan, by the eyes and ears, at once.

The first word of Louis to his musketeer, as if he wished it to contrast with what he was saying at the moment, was a kind "good day." His second was to send away Colbert. The latter left the king's cabinet, pallid and tottering, whilst D'Artagnan twisted up the ends of his mustache.

"I love to see one of my servants in this disorder," said the king, admiring the martial stains upon the clothes of his envoy.

"I thought, sire, my presence at the Louvre was sufficiently urgent to excuse my presenting myself thus before you."

"You bring me great news, then, monsieur."

"Sire, the thing is this, in two words: Belle-Isle is fortified, admirably fortified; Belle-Isle has a double *enceinte*, a citadel, two detached forts; its ports contain three corsairs; and the side batteries only await their cannon."

"I know all that, monsieur," replied the king.

"What! your majesty knows all that?" replied the musketeer, stupefied.

"I have the plan of the fortifications of Belle-Isle," said the king.

"Your majesty has the plan?"

"Here it is."

"It is really correct, sire: I saw a similar one on the spot."

D'Artagnan's brow became clouded.

"Ah! I understand all. Your majesty did not trust to me alone, but sent some other person," said he, in a reproachful tone.

"Of what importance is the manner, monsieur, in which I have learnt what I know, so that I know it?"

"Sire, sire," said the musketeer, without seeking even to conceal his dissatisfaction; "but I must be permitted to say to your majesty, that it is not worth while to make me use such speed, to risk twenty times the breaking of my neck, to salute me on my arrival with such intelligence. Sire, when people are not trusted, or are deemed insufficient they should scarcely be employed." And D'Artagnan, with a movement perfectly military, stamped with his foot, and left upon the floor dust stained with blood. The king looked at him, inwardly enjoying his first triumph.

"Monsieur," said he, at the expiration of a minute, "not only is Belle-Isle known to me, but, still further, Belle-Isle is mine."

"That is well ! that is well, sire, I ask but one thing more," replied D'Artagnan.—"My discharge."

"What ! your discharge ?"

"Without doubt I am too proud to eat the bread of the king without earning it, or rather by gaining it badly.—My discharge, sire !"

"Oh, oh !"

"I ask for my discharge, or I will take it."

"You are angry, monsieur ?"

"I have reason, *mordoux* ! Thirty-two hours in the saddle, I ride night and day, I perform prodigies of speed, I arrive stiff as the corpse of a man who has been hung—and another arrives before me ! Come, sire, I am a fool !—My discharge, sire !"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said Louis, leaning his white hand upon the dusty arm of the musketeer, "what I tell you will not at all affect that which I promised you. A king's word given must be kept." And the king going straight to his table, opened a drawer, and took out a folded paper. "Here is your-commission of captain of musketeers ; you have won it, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan opened the paper eagerly, and scanned it twice. He could scarcely believe his eyes.

"And this commission is given you," continued the king, "not only on account of your journey to Belle-Isle, but, moreover, for your brave intervention at the Place de Grève. There, likewise, you served me vallantly."

"Ah, ah !" said D'Artagnan, without his self-command being able to prevent a blush from mounting to his eyes—"you know that also, sire ?"

"Yes, I know it."

The king possessed a piercing glance and an infallible judgment, when it was his object to read men's minds. "You have something to say," said he to the musketeer, "something to say which you do not say. Come, speak

freely, monsieur : you know that I told you, once for all, that you are to be always quite frank with me."

"Well, sire! what I have to say is this, that I would prefer being made captain of musketeers for having charged a battery at the head of my company or taken a city, than for causing two wretches to be hung."

"Is this quite true you tell me?"

"And why should your majesty suspect me of dissimulation, I ask?"

"Because I know you well, monsieur; you cannot repent of having drawn your sword for me."

"Well, in that your majesty is deceived, and greatly; yes, I do repent of having drawn my sword on account of the results that action produced; the poor men who were hung, sire, were neither your enemies nor mine; and they could not defend themselves."

The king preserved silence for a moment. "And your companion, M. d'Artagnan, does he partake of your repentance?"

"My companion?"

"Yes, you were not alone, I have been told."

"Alone, where?"

"At the Place de Grève."

"No, sire, no," said D'Artagnan, blushing at the idea that the king might have a suspicion that he, D'Artagnan, had wished to engross to himself all the glory that belonged to Raoul; "no, *mordieux!* and as your majesty says, I had a companion, and a good companion, too."

"A young man?"

"Yes, sire; a young man. Oh! your majesty must accept my compliments, you are as well informed of things out of doors as things within. It is M. Colbert who makes all these fine reports to the king."

"M. Colbert has said nothing but good of you, M. d'Ar-

tagnan, and he would have met with a bad reception if he had come to tell me anything else."

"That is fortunate!"

"But he also said much good of that young man."

"And with justice," said the musketeer.

"In short, it appears that this young man is a fire-eater," said Louis, in order to sharpen the sentiment which he mistook for envy.

"A fire-eater! Yes, sire," repeated D'Artagnan, delighted on his part to direct the king's attention to Rasul.

"Do you not know his name?"

"Well, I think——"

"You know him then?"

"I have known him nearly five-and-twenty years, sire."

"Why, he is scarcely twenty-five years old!" cried the king.

"Well, sire! I have known him ever since he was born, that is all."

"Do you affirm that?"

"Sire," said D'Artagnan, "your majesty questions me with a mistrust in which I recognize another character than your own. M. Colbert, who has so well informed you, has he not forgotten to tell you that this young man is the son of my most intimate friend?"

"The Vicomte de Bragelonne?"

"Certainly, sire. The father of the Vicomte de Bragelonne is M. le Comte de la Fère, who so powerfully assisted in the restoration of King Charles II. Bragelonne comes of a valiant race, sire."

"Then he is the son of that nobleman who came to me, or rather to M. Mazarin, on the part of king Charles II., to offer me his alliance?"

"Exactly, sire."

"And the Comte de la Fère is a great soldier, say you?"

"Sire, he is a man who has drawn his sword more times for the king, your father, than there are, at present, months in the happy life of your majesty."

It was Louis XIV. who now bit his lip.

"That is well, M. d'Artagnan, very well! And M. le Comte de la Fère is your friend, say you?"

"For about forty years; yes, sire. Your majesty may see that I do not speak to you of yesterday."

"Should you be glad to see this young man, M. d'Artagnan?"

"Delighted, sire."

The king touched his bell, and an usher appeared. "Call M. de Bragelonne," said the king.

"Ah! ah! he is here?" said D'Artagnan.

"He is on guard to-day, at the Louvre, with the company of the gentlemen of monsieur le prince."

The king had scarcely ceased speaking, when Raoul presented himself, and, on seeing D'Artagnan, smiled on him with that charming smile which is only found upon the lips of youth.

"Come, come," said D'Artagnan, familiarly, to Raoul, "the king will allow you to embrace me; only tell his majesty you thank him."

Raoul bowed so gracefully, that Louis, to whom all superior qualities were pleasing when they did not overshadow his own, admired his beauty, strength and modesty.

"Monsieur," said the king, addressing Raoul, "I have asked monsieur le prince to be kind enough to give you up to me; I have received his reply, and you belong to me from this morning. Monsieur le prince was a good master, but I hope you will not lose by the exchange."

"Yes, yes, Raoul, be satisfied; the king has some good in him," said D'Artagnan, who had fathomed the character of Louis, and who played with his self-love, within

certain limits; always observing, be it understood, the proprieties, and flattering, even when he appeared to be bantering.

"Sire," said Bragelonne, with a voice soft and musical, and with the natural and easy elocution he inherited from his father; "Sire, it is not from to-day that I belong to your majesty."

"Oh! no, I know," said the king; "you mean your enterprise of the Grève. That day, you were truly mine, monsieur."

"Sire, it is not of that day, I would speak; it would not become me to refer to so paltry a service in the presence of such a man as M. d'Artagnan. I would speak of a circumstance which created an epoch in my life, and which consecrated me, from the age of sixteen, to the devoted service of your majesty."

"Ah! ah!" said the king, "what was that circumstance? Tell me, monsieur."

"This is it, sire.—When I was setting out on my first campaign, that is to say, to join the army of monsieur le prince, M. le Comte de la Fère came to conduct me as far as Saint-Denis, where the remains of King Louis XIII. wait, upon the lowest steps of the funeral *basilique*, a successor, whom God will not send him, I hope, for many years. Then he made me swear upon the ashes of our masters, to serve royalty represented by you—incarnate in you, sire—to serve it in word, in thought, and in action. I swore, and God and the dead were witnesses to my oath. During ten years, sire, I have not so often as I desired had occasion to keep it. I am a soldier of your majesty, and, nothing else; and, on calling me nearer to you, I do not change my master, I only change my garrison."

Raoul was silent, and bowed. Louis still listened after he had done speaking.

"*Mordieux!*" cried D'Artagnan, "that was well spoken! was it not, your majesty? A good race! a noble race!"

"Yes," murmured the agitated king, without, however, daring to manifest his emotion, for it had no other cause than contact with a nature intrinsically noble. "Yes, monsieur, you say truly:—wherever you were, you were the king's. But in changing your garrison, believe me you will find an advancement of which you are worthy."

Raoul saw that this ended what the king had to say to him. And with the perfect tact which characterized his refined nature, he bowed and retired.

"Is there anything else, monsieur, of which you have to inform me?" said the king, when he found himself again alone with D'Artagnan.

"Yes, sire, and I kept that news for the last, for it is sad, and will clothe European royalty in mourning."

"What do you tell me?"

"Sire, in passing through Blois, a word, a sad word, echoed from the palace, struck my ear."

"In truth, you terrify me, M. d'Artagnan."

"Sire, this word was pronounced to me by a *piqueur*, who wore crape on his arm."

"My uncle, Gaston of Orleans, perhaps?"

"Sire, he has rendered his last sigh."

"And I was not warned of it!" cried the king, whose royal susceptibility saw an insult in the absence of this intelligence.

"Oh! do not be angry, sire," said D'Artagnan; "neither the couriers of Paris, nor the couriers of the whole world, can travel with your servant; the courier from Blois will not be here these two hours, and he rides well, I assure you, seeing that I only passed him on the thither side of Orleans."

"My uncle Gaston," murmured Louis, pressing his hand to his brow, and comprising in those three words

all that his memory recalled of that symbol of opposing sentiments.

"Eh! yes, sire, it is thus," said D'Artagnan, philosophically replying to the royal thought, "it is thus the past flies away."

"That is true, monsieur, that is true; but there remains for us, thank God! the future; and we will try to make it not too dark."

"I feel confidence in your majesty on that head," said D'Artagnan, bowing, "and now——"

"You are right, monsieur; I had forgotten the hundred leagues you have just ridden. Go, monsieur, take care of one of the best of soldiers, and when you have reposed a little, come and place yourself at my disposal."

"Sire, absent or present, I am always yours."

D'Artagnan bowed and retired. Then, as if he had only come from Fontainebleau, he quickly traversed the Louvre to rejoin Bragelonne.

CHAPTER XXI.

A LOVER AND HIS MISTRESS.

WHILST the wax-lights were burning in the castle of Blois, around the inanimate body of Gaston of Orleans, that last representative of the past; whilst the *bourgeois* of the city were thinking out his epitaph, which was far from being a panegyric; whilst madame the dowager, no longer remembering that in her young days she had loved that senseless corpse to such a degree as to fly the paternal palace for his sake, was making, within twenty paces of the funeral apartment, her little calculations of interest and her little sacrifices of pride; other interests and other

prides were in agitation in all the parts of the castle into which a living soul could penetrate. Neither the lugubrious sounds of the bells, nor the voices of the chanters, nor the splendor of the wax-lights through the windows, nor the preparations for the funeral, had power to divert the attention of two persons, placed at a window of the interior court—a window that we are acquainted with, and which lighted a chamber forming part of what were called the little apartments. For the rest, a joyous beam of the sun, for the sun appeared to care little for the loss France had just suffered; a sunbeam, we say, descended upon them, drawing perfumes from the neighboring flowers, and animating the walls themselves. These two persons, so occupied, not by the death of the duke, but by the conversation which was the consequence of that death, were a young woman and a young man. The latter personage, a man of from twenty-five to twenty-six years of age, with a mien sometimes lively and sometimes dull, making good use of two large eyes, shaded with long eyelashes, was short of stature and swart of skin; he smiled with an enormous, but well-furnished mouth, and his pointed chin, which appeared to enjoy a mobility nature does not ordinarily grant to that portion of the countenance, leant from time to time very lovingly towards his interlocutrix, who, we must say, did not always draw back so rapidly as strict propriety had a right to require. The young girl—we know her, for we have already seen her, at that very same window, by the light of that same sun—the young girl presented a singular mixture of shyness and reflection; she was charming when she laughed, beautiful when she became serious; but, let us hasten to say, she was more frequently charming than beautiful. These two appeared to have attained the culminating point of a discussion—half-bantering, half-serious.

“Now, Monsieur Malicorne,” said the young girl, “does

it, at length, please you that we should talk reasonably?"

"You believe that that is very easy, Mademoiselle Aure," replied the young man. "To do what we like, when we can only do what we are able——"

"Good! there he is bewildered in his phrases."

"Who, I?"

"Yes, you; quit that lawyer's logic, my dear."

"Another impossibility."

"Clerk, I am Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Demoiselle, I am Monsieur Malicorne."

"Alas, I know it well, and you overwhelm me by your rank; so I will say no more to you."

"Well, no, I don't overwhelm you: say what you have to tell me—say it, I insist upon it."

"Well, I obey you."

"That is truly fortunate."

"Monsieur is dead."

"Ah, *peste!* there's news! And where do you come from, to be able to tell us that?"

"I come from Orleans, mademoiselle."

"And is that all the news you bring?"

"Ah, no; I am come to tell you that Madame Henrietta of England is coming to marry the king's brother."

"Indeed, Malicorne, you are insupportable with your news of the last century. Now, mind, if you persist in this bad habit of laughing at people, I will have you turned out."

"Oh!"

"Yes: for really you exasperate me."

"There, there. Patience, mademoiselle."

"You want to make yourself of consequence; I know well enough why. Go!"

"Tell me, and I will answer you frankly, yes, if the thing be true."

"You know that I am anxious to have that commission

of lady of honor, which I have been foolish enough to ask of you, and you do not use your credit."

"Who, I?" Malicorne cast down his eyes, joined his hands, and assumed his sullen air. "And what credit can the poor clerk of a procureur have, pray?"

"Your father has not twenty thousand livres a year for nothing, M. Malicorne."

"A provincial fortune, Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Your father is not in the secrets of monsieur le prince for nothing."

"An advantage which is confined to lending monseigneur money."

"In a word, you are not the most cunning young fellow in the province for nothing."

"You flatter me!"

"Who, I?"

"Yes, you."

"How so?"

"Since I maintain that I have no credit, and you maintain I have."

"Well, then,—my commission?"

"Well,—your commission?"

"Shall I have it, or shall I not?"

"You shall have it."

"Ay, but when?"

"When you like."

"Where is it, then?"

"In my pocket."

"How—in your pocket?"

"Yes."

And, with a smile, Malicorne drew from his pocket a letter, upon which mademoiselle seized as a prey, and which she read eagerly. As she read, her face brightened.

"Malicorne," cried she after having read it, "In truth, you are a good lad."

"What for, mademoiselle?"

"Because you might have been paid for this commission, and you have not." And she burst into a loud laugh, thinking to put the clerk out of countenance; but Malicorne sustained the attack bravely.

"I do not understand you," said he. It was now Montalais who was disconcerted in her turn. "I have declared my sentiments to you," continued Malicorne. "You have told me three times, laughing all the while, that you did not love me; you have embraced me once without laughing, and that is all I want."

"All?" said the proud and coquettish Montalais, in a tone through which wounded pride was visible.

"Absolutely all, mademoiselle," replied Malicorne.

"Ah!"—And this monosyllable indicated as much anger as the young man might have expected gratitude. He shook his head quietly.

"Listen, Montalais," said he, without heeding whether that familiarity pleased his mistress or not; "let us not dispute about it."

"And why not?"

"Because during the year which I have known you, you might have had me turned out of doors twenty times if I did not please you."

"Indeed; and on what account should I have had you turned out?"

"Because I had been sufficiently impertinent for that."

"Oh, that,—yes, that's true."

"You see plainly that you are forced to avow it," said Malicorne.

"Monsieur Malicorne!"

"Don't let us be angry; if you have retained me, then it has not been without cause."

"It is not, at least, because I love you," cried Montalais.

"Granted. I will even say that, at this moment, I am certain that you hate me."

"Oh, you have never spoken so truly."

"Well, on my part I detest you."

"Ah, I take the act."

"Take it. You find me brutal and foolish ; on my part I find you have a harsh voice, and your face is too often distorted with anger. At this moment you would allow yourself to be thrown out of that window rather than allow me to kiss the tip of your finger ; I would precipitate myself from the top of the balcony rather than touch the hem of your robe. But, in five minutes, you will love me, and I shall adore you. Oh, it is just so."

"I doubt it."

"And I swear it."

"Coxcomb !"

"And then, that is not the true reason. You stand in need of me, Aure, and I of you. When it pleases you to be gay, I make you laugh ; when it suits me to be loving, I look at you. I have given you a commission of lady of honor which you wished for ; you will give me, presently, something I wish for."

"I will ?"

"Yes, you will ; but, at this moment, my dear Aure, I declare to you that I wish for absolutely nothing, so be at ease."

"You are a frightful man, Malicorne ; I was going to rejoice at getting this commission, and thus you quench my joy."

"Good ; there is no time lost,—you will rejoice when I am gone."

"Go, then ; and after——"

"So be it ; but, in the first place, a piece of advice."

"What is it ?"

"Resume your good-humor,—you are ugly when you pout."

"Coarse!"

"Come, let us tell the truth to each other, while we are about it."

"Oh, Malicorne! Bad-hearted man!"

"Oh, Montalais! Ungrateful girl!"

The young man leant with his elbow upon the window-frame;—Montalais took a book and opened it. Malicorne stood up, brushed his hat with his sleeve, smoothed down his black doublet;—Montalais, though pretending to read, looked at him out of the corner of her eye.

"Good!" cried she, furious; "he has assumed his respectful air—and he will pout for a week."

"A fortnight, mademoiselle," said Malicorne, bowing.

Montalais lifted up her little doubled fist. "Monster!" said she; "oh! that I were a man!"

"What would you do to me?"

"I would strangle you."

"Ah! very well, then," said Malicorne; "I believe I begin to desire something."

"And what do you desire, Monsieur Demon? That I should lose my soul from anger?"

Malicorne was rolling his hat respectfully between his fingers; but, all at once, he let fall his hat, seized the young girl by the shoulders, pulled her towards him, and sealed her mouth with two lips that were very warm, for a man pretending to so much indifference. Aure would have cried out, but the cry was stifled in the kiss. Nervous and, apparently, angry, the young girl pushed Malicorne against the wall.

"Good!" said Malicorne, philosophically, "that's enough for six weeks. Adieu, mademoiselle, accept my very humble salutation." And he made three steps towards the door.

"Well! no,—you shall not go!" cried Montalais, stamping with her little foot. "Stay where you are! I order you!"

"You order me?"

"Yes; am I not mistress?"

"Of my heart and soul, without doubt."

"A pretty property! *ma foi!* The soul is silly and the heart dry."

"Beware, Montalais, I know you," said Malicorne; "you are going to fall in love with your humble servant."

"Well, yes!" said, she, hanging round his neck with childish indolence, rather than with loving abandonment.

"Well, yes! for I must thank you at least."

"And for what?"

"For the commission; is it not my whole future?"

"And mine."

Montalais looked at him.

"It is frightful," said she, "that one can never guess whether you are speaking seriously or not."

"I cannot speak more seriously. I was going to Paris,—you are going there,—*we* are going there."

"And so it was for that motive only you have served me; selfish fellow!"

"What would you have me say, Aure? I cannot live without you."

"Well! in truth, it is just so with me; you are, nevertheless, it must be confessed, a very bad-hearted young man."

"Aure, my dear Aure, take care! if you take to calling names again, you know the effect they produce upon me, and I shall adore you." And so saying, Malicorne drew the young girl a second time towards him. But at that instant a step resounded on the staircase. The young people were so close, that they would have been surprised in the arms of each other, if Montalais had not violently



"WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME SAY, AURE? I CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT YOU."

pushed Malicorne, with his back against the door, just then opening. A loud cry, followed by angry reproaches, immediately resounded. It was Madame de Saint-Remy who uttered the cry and the angry words. The unlucky Malicorne almost crushed her between the wall and the door she was coming in at.

"It is again that good-for-nothing!" cried the old lady. "Always here!"

"Ah, madame!" replied Malicorne, in a respectful tone; "it is eight long days since I was here."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH WE AT LENGTH SEE THE TRUE HEROINE OF THIS HISTORY APPEAR.

BEHIND Madame de Saint-Remy stood Mademoiselle de la Vallière. She heard the explosion of maternal anger, and as she divined the cause of it, she entered the chamber trembling, and perceived the unlucky Malicorne, whose woeful countenance might have softened or set laughing whoever observed it coolly. He had promptly intrenched himself behind a large chair, as if to avoid the first attacks of Madame de Saint-Remy; he had no hopes of prevailing with words, for she spoke louder than he, and without stopping; but he reckoned upon the eloquence of his gestures. The old lady would neither listen to nor see anything; Malicorne had long been one of her antipathies. But her anger was too great not to overflow from Malicorne on his accomplice. Montalais had her turn.

"And you, mademoiselle; you may be certain I shall inform madame of what is going on in the apartment of one of her ladies of honor?"

"Oh, dear mother!" cried Mademoiselle de la Vallière, "for mercy's sake, spare——"

"Hold your tongue, mademoiselle, and do not uselessly trouble yourself to intercede for unworthy people; that a young maid of honor like you should be subjected to a bad example is, certes, a misfortune great enough: but that you should sanction it by your indulgence is what I will not allow."

"But in truth," said Montalais, rebelling again, "I do not know under what pretense you treat me thus. I am doing no harm, I suppose?"

"And that great good-for-nothing, mademoiselle," resumed Madame de Saint-Remy, pointing to Malicorne, "is he here to do any good, I ask you?"

"He is neither here for good nor harm, madame; he comes to see me, that is all."

"It is all very well! all very well!" said the old lady. "Her royal highness shall be informed of it, and she will judge."

"At all events, I do not see why," replied Montalais, "it should be forbidden M. Malicorne to have intentions towards me, if his intentions are honorable."

"Honorable intentions with such a face!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy.

"I thank you in the name of my face, madame," said Malicorne.

"Come, my daughter, come," continued Madame de Saint-Remy; "we will go and inform madame that at the very moment she is weeping for her husband, at the moment when we are all weeping for a master in this old castle of Blois, the abode of grief, there are people who amuse themselves with flirtations!"

"Oh!" cried both the accused, with one voice.

"A maid of honor! a maid of honor!" cried the old lady, lifting her hands towards heaven.

"Well! it is there you are mistaken, madame," said Montalais, highly exasperated; "I am no longer a maid of honor, of madame's at least."

"Have you given in your resignation, mademoiselle? That is well! I cannot but applaud such a determination, and I do applaud it."

"I do not give in my resignation, madame; I take another service,—that is all."

"In the *bourgeoisie* or in the *robe*?" asked Madame de Saint-Remy, disdainfully.

"Please to learn, madame, that I am not a girl to serve either *bourgeoises* or *robines*; and that instead of the miserable court at which you vegetate, I am going to reside in a court almost royal."

"Ha, ha! a royal court," said Madame de Saint-Remy, forcing a laugh; "a royal court! What think you of that, my daughter?"

And she turned round towards Mademoiselle de la Vallière, whom she would by main force have dragged away from Montalais, and who, instead of obeying the impulse of Madame de Saint-Remy, looked first at her mother and then at Montalais with her beautiful conciliatory eyes.

"I did not say a royal court, madame," replied Montalais; "because Madame Henrietta of England, who is about to become the wife of S. A. R. Monsieur, is not a queen. I said *almost* royal, and I spoke correctly, since she will be sister-in-law to the king."

A thunderbolt falling upon the castle of Blois would not have astonished Madame de Saint-Remy more than the last sentence of Montalais.

"What do you say? of Son Altesse Royale Madame Henrietta?" stammered out the old lady.

"I say I am going to belong to her household, as maid of honor; that is what I say."

"As maid of honor!" cried, at the same time, Madame de Saint-Remy with despair, and Mademoiselle de la Vallière with delight.

"Yes, madame, as maid of honor."

The old lady's head sank down as if the blow had been too severe for her. But, almost immediately recovering herself, she launched a last projectile at her adversary.

"Oh! oh!" said she; "I have heard of many of these sorts of promises beforehand, which often lead people to flatter themselves with wild hopes, and, at the last moment, when the time comes to keep the promises, and have the hopes realized, they are surprised to see the great credit upon which they reckoned vanish like smoke."

"Oh! madame, the credit of my protector is incontestable, and his promises are as good as deeds."

"And would it be indiscreet to ask you the name of this powerful protector?"

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* no! it is that gentleman there," said Montalais, pointing to Malicorne, who, during this scene, had preserved the most imperturbable coolness, and the most comic dignity.

"Monsieur!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy, with an explosion of hilarity, "monsieur is your protector! Is the man whose credit is so powerful, and whose promises are as good as deeds, Monsieur Malicorne!"

Malicorne bowed.

As to Montalais, as her sole reply, she drew the *brevet* from her pocket, and showed it to the old lady.

"Here is the *brevet*," said she.

At once all was over. As soon as she had cast a rapid glance over this fortunate *brevet*, the good lady clasped her hands, an unspeakable expression of envy and despair contracted her countenance, and she was obliged to sit down to avoid fainting. Montalais was not malicious enough to rejoice extravagantly at her victory, or to over-

whelm the conquered enemy, particularly when that enemy was the mother of her friend; she used then, but did not abuse, her triumph. Malicorne was less generous; he assumed noble *poses* in his *fauteuil*, and stretched himself out with a familiarity which, two hours earlier, would have drawn upon him threats of a caning.

"Maid of honor to the young madame!" repeated Madame de Saint-Remy, still but half convinced.

"Yes, madame, and through the protection of M. Malicorne, moreover."

"It is incredible!" repeated the old lady: "is it not incredible, Louise?" But Louise did not reply; she was sitting, thoughtful, almost sad; passing one hand over her beautiful brow, she sighed heavily.

"Well, but, monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Remy, all at once, "how did you manage to obtain this post?"

"I asked for it, madame."

"Of whom?"

"One of my friends."

"And have you friends sufficiently powerful at court to give you such proofs of their credit?"

"It appears so."

"And may one ask the name of these friends?"

"I did not say I had many friends, madame, I said I had one friend."

"And that friend is called?"

"*Peste!* madame, you go too far! When one has a friend as powerful as mine, we do not publish his name in that fashion, in open day, in order that he may be stolen from us."

"You are right, monsieur, to be silent as to that name; for I think it would be pretty difficult for you to tell it."

"At all events," said Montalais, "if the friend does not exist, the *brevet* does, and that cuts short the question."

"Then, I conceive," said Madame de Saint-Remy, with

the gracious smile of a cat who is going to scratch, "when I found monsieur here just now——"

"Well?"

"He brought you the *brevet*."

"Exactly, madame; you have guessed rightly."

"Well, then, nothing can be more moral or proper."

"I think so, madame."

"And I have been wrong, as it appears, in reproaching you, mademoiselle."

"Very wrong, madame; but I am so accustomed to your reproaches, that I pardon you these."

"In that case, let us begone, Louise; we have nothing to do but to retire. Well!"

"Madame!" said La Vallière starting, "did you speak?"

"You do not appear to be listening, my child."

"No, madame, I was thinking."

"About what?"

"A thousand things."

"You bear me no ill-will, at least, Louise?" cried Montalais, pressing her hand.

"And why should I, my dear Auro?" replied the girl, in a voice soft as a flute.

"*Dame!*" resumed Madame de Saint-Remy; "if she did bear you a little ill-will, poor girl, she could not be much blamed."

"And why should she bear me ill-will, good gracious?"

"It appears to me that she is of as good a family, and as pretty as you."

"Mother! mother!" cried Louise.

"Prettier a hundred times, madame—not of a better family; but that does not tell me why Louise should bear me ill-will."

"Do you think it will be very amusing for her to be buried alive at Blois, when you are going to shine at Paris?"

"But, madame, it is not I who prevent Louise following me thither; on the contrary, I should certainly be most happy if she came there."

"But it appears that M. Malicorne, who is all-powerful at court——"

"Ah! so much the worse, madame," said Malicorne, "every one for himself in this poor world."

"Malicorne! Malicorne!" said Montalais. Then stooping towards the young man:—

"Occupy Madame de Saint-Remy, either in disputing with her, or making it up with her; I must speak to Louise." And, at the same time, a soft pressure of the hand recompensed Malicorne for his future obedience. Malicorne went grumbling towards Madame Saint-Remy, whilst Montalais said to her friend, throwing one arm around her neck:—

"What is the matter? Tell *me*. Is it true that you would not love me if I were to shine, as your mother says?"

"Oh, no!" said the young girl, with difficulty restraining her tears; "on the contrary, I rejoice at your good fortune."

"Rejoice! why, one would say you are ready to cry!"

"Do people never weep except from envy?"

"Oh! yes, I understand; I am going to Paris and that word Paris recalls to your mind a certain cavalier——"

"Aure!"

"A certain cavalier who formerly lived near Blois, and who now resides at Paris."

"In truth, I know not what ails me, but I feel stifled."

"Weep, then, weep, as you cannot give me a smile!"

Louise raised her sweet face, which the tears, rolling down one after the other, illumined like diamonds.

"Come, confess," said Montalais.

"What shall I confess?"

"What makes you weep; people don't weep without cause. I am your friend; whatever you would wish me to do, I will do. Malicorne is more powerful than you would think. Do you wish to go to Paris?"

"Alas!" sighed Louise.

"Do you wish to come to Paris?"

"To remain here alone, in this old castle, I who have enjoyed the delightful habit of listening to your songs, of pressing your hand, of running about the park with you. Oh! how I shall be *ennuyée*! how quickly I shall die!"

"Do you wish to come to Paris?"

Louise breathed another sigh.

"You do not answer me."

"What would you that I should reply?"

"Yes or no; that is not very difficult, I think."

"Oh! you are very fortunate, Montalais!"

"That is to say you would like to be in my place."

Louise was silent.

"Little obstinate thing!" said Montalais; "did ever any one keep her secrets from her friend thus? But, confess that you would like to come to Paris; confess that you are dying with the wish to see Raoul again?"

"I cannot confess that."

"Then you are wrong."

"In what way?"

"Because—— Do you see this *brevet*?"

"To be sure I do."

"Well, I would have got you a similar one."

"By whose means?"

"Malicorne's."

"Aure, are you telling the truth? Is that possible?"

"Malicorne is there; and what he has done for me, he surely can for you."

Malicorne had heard his name pronounced twice; he was delighted at having an opportunity of coming to a

conclusion with Madame de Saint-Remy, and he turned round :—

“What is the question, mademoiselle?”

“Come hither, Malicorne,” said Montalais, with an imperious gesture. Malicorne obeyed.

“A *brevet* like this,” said Montalais.

“How so?”

“A *brevet* like this; that is plain enough.”

“But——”

“I want one—I must have one!”

“Oh! oh! you must have one!”

“Yes.”

“It is impossible, is it not, M. Malicorne?” said Louise, with her sweet soft voice.

“If it is for *you*, mademoiselle——”

“For me. Yes, Monsieur Malicorne, it *would* be for me.”

“And if Mademoiselle de Montalais asks it at the same time——”

“Mademoiselle de Montalais does not ask it, she requires it.”

“Well! we will endeavor to obey you, mademoiselle.”

“And you will have her named?”

“We will try.”

“No evasive answers, Louise de la Vallière shall be maid of honor to Madame Henrietta within a week.”

“How you talk!”

“Within a week, or else——”

“Well! or else?”

“You may take back your *brevet*, Monsieur Malicorne; I will not leave my friend.”

“Dear Montalais!”

“That is right. Keep your *brevet*; Mademoiselle de la Vallière shall be a maid of honor.”

“Is that true?”

"Quite true."

"I may then hope to go to Paris?"

"Depend upon it."

"Oh! Monsieur Malicorne, what joy!" cried Louise, clapping her hands, and bounding with pleasure.

"Little dissembler!" said Montalais, "try again to make me believe you are not in love with Raoul."

Louise blushed like a rose in June, but instead of replying, she ran and embraced her mother. "Madame," said she, "do you know that M. Malicorne is going to have me appointed maid of honor?"

"M. Malicorne is a prince in disguise," replied the old lady, "he is all-powerful, seemingly."

"Should you also like to be maid of honor?" asked Malicorne of Madame de Saint-Remy. "Whilst I am about it, I might as well get everybody appointed."

And upon that he went away, leaving the poor lady quite disconcerted.

"Humph!" murmured Malicorne as he descended the stairs,—*"Humph! there goes another note of a thousand livres! but I must get through as well as I can; my friend Manicamp does nothing for nothing."*

CHAPTER XXIII.

MALICORNE AND MANICAMP.

THE introduction of these two new personages into this history and that mysterious affinity of names and sentiments, merit some attention on the part of both historian and reader. We will then enter into some details concerning Messieurs Malicorne and Manicamp. Malicorne, we know, had made the journey to Orleans in search of the

brevet destined for Mademoiselle de Montalais, the arrival of which had produced such a strong feeling at the castle of Blois. At that moment, M. de Manicamp was at Orleans. A singular personage was this M. de Manicamp ; a very intelligent young fellow, always poor, always needy, although he dipped his hand freely into the purse of M. le Comte de Guiche, one of the best furnished purses of the period. M. le Comte de Guiche had had, as the companion of his boyhood, this de Manicamp, a poor gentleman, vassal-born, of the house of Grammont. M. de Manicamp, with his tact and talent, had created himself a revenue in the opulent family of the celebrated maréchal. From his infancy he had, with calculation beyond his age, lent his name and complaisance to the follies of the Comte de Guiche. If his noble companion had stolen some fruit destined for Madame la Maréchale, if he had broken a mirror, or put out a dog's eye, Manicamp declared himself guilty of the crime committed, and received the punishment, which was not made the milder for falling on the innocent. But this was the way this system of abnegation was paid for : instead of wearing such mean habiliments as his paternal fortunes entitled him to, he was able to appear brilliant, superb, like a young noble of fifty thousand livres a year. It was not that he was mean in character or humble in spirit ; no, he was a philosopher, or rather he had the indifference, the apathy, the obstinacy which banish from man every sentiment of the supernatural. His sole ambition was to spend money. But, in this respect, the worthy M. de Manicamp was a gulf. Three or four times every year he drained the Comte de Guiche, and when the Comte de Guiche was thoroughly drained, when he had turned out his pockets and his purse before him, when he declared that it would be at least a fortnight before paternal munificence would refill those pockets and that purse, Manicamp lost all his

energy, he went to bed, remained there, ate nothing and sold his handsome clothes, under the pretense that, remaining in bed, he did not want them. During this prostration of mind and strength, the purse of the Comte de Guiche was getting full again, and when once filled, overflowed into that of De Manicamp, who bought new clothes, dressed himself again, and recommenced the same life he had followed before. This mania of selling his new clothes for a quarter of what they were worth, had rendered our hero sufficiently celebrated in Orleans, a city where, in general, we should be puzzled to say why he came to pass his days of penitence. Provincial *débauchés*, *petits-mâîtres* of six hundred livres a year, shared the fragments of his opulence.

Among the admirers of these splendid toilettes, our friend Malicorne was conspicuous; he was the son of a syndic of the city, of whom M. de Condé, always needy as a De Condé, often borrowed money at enormous interest. M. Malicorne kept the paternal money-chest; that is to say, that in those times of easy morals, he had made for himself, by following the example of his father, and lending at high interest for short terms, a revenue of eighteen hundred livres, without reckoning six hundred livres furnished by the generosity of the syndic; so that Malicorne was the king of the gay youth of Orleans, having two thousand four hundred livres to scatter, squander, and waste on follies of every kind. But, quite contrary to Manicamp, Malicorne was terribly ambitious. He loved from ambition: he spent money out of ambition: and he would have ruined himself for ambition. Malicorne had determined to rise, at whatever price it might cost, and for this, at whatever price it did cost, he had given himself a mistress and a friend. The mistress, Mademoiselle de Montalais, was cruel, as regarded love; but she was of a noble family, and that was sufficient for Malicorne. The friend had

little or no friendship, but he was the favorite of the Comte de Guiche, himself the friend of Monsieur, the king's brother; and that was sufficient for Malicorne. Only, in the chapter of charges, Mademoiselle de Montalais cost *per an.*:—Ribbons, gloves, and sweets, a thousand livres. De Manicamp cost—money lent, never returned—from twelve to fifteen hundred livres *per an.* So that there was nothing left for Malicorne. Ah! yes, we are mistaken; there was left the paternal strong box. He employed a mode of proceeding, upon which he preserved the most profound secrecy, and which consisted in advancing to himself, from the coffers of the syndie, half a dozen years' profits, that is to say, fifteen thousand livres, swearing to himself—observe, quite to himself—to repay this deficiency as soon as an opportunity should present itself. The opportunity was expected to be the concession of a good post in the household of Monsieur, when that household would be established at the period of his marriage. This juncture had arrived, and the household was about to be established. A good post in the family of a prince of the blood, when it is given by the credit, and on the recommendation of a friend, like the Comte de Guiche, is worth at least twelve thousand livres *per an.*; and by the means which M. Malicorne had taken to make his revenues fructify, twelve thousand livres might rise to twenty thousand. Then, when once an incumbent of this post, he would marry Mademoiselle de Montalais. Mademoiselle de Montalais, of a half noble family, not only would be dowered, but would ennoble Malicorne. But, in order that Mademoiselle de Montalais, who had not a large patrimonial fortune, although an only daughter, should be suitably dowered, it was necessary that she should belong to some great princess, as prodigal as the dowager Madame was covetous. And in order that the wife should not be of one party whilst the husband belonged to the other,

a situation which presents serious inconveniences, particularly with characters like those of the future consorts—Malicorne had imagined the idea of making the central point of union the household of Monsieur, the king's brother. Mademoiselle de Montalais would be maid of honor to Madame. M. Malicorne would be officer to Monsieur.

It is plain the plan was formed by a clear head ; it is plain, also, that it had been bravely executed. Malicorne had asked Manicamp to ask a *brevet* of maid of honor of the Comte de Guiche ; and the Comte de Guiche had asked this *brevet* of Monsieur, who had signed it without hesitation. The constructive plan of Malicorne—for we may well suppose that the combinations of a mind as active as his were not confined to the present, but extended to the future—the constructive plan of Malicorne, we say, was this :—To obtain entrance into the household of Madame Henrietta for a woman devoted to himself, who was intelligent, young, handsome, and intriguing ; to learn, by means of this woman, all the feminine secrets of the young household ; whilst he, Malicorne, and his friend Manicamp, should, between them, know all the male secrets of the young community. It was by these means that a rapid and splendid fortune might be acquired at one and the same time. Malicorne was a vile name ; he who bore it had too much wit to conceal this truth from himself ; but an estate might be purchased ; and Malicorne of some place, or even De Malicorne itself, for short, would ring more nobly on the ear.

It was not improbable that a most aristocratic origin might be hunted up by the heralds for this name of Malicorne ; might it not come from some estate where a bull with mortal horns had caused some great misfortune, and baptized the soil with the blood it had spilt ? Certes, this plan presented itself bristling with difficulties : but

the greatest of all was Mademoiselle de Montalais herself. Capricious, variable, close, giddy, free, prudish, a virgin armed with claws, Erigone stained with grapes, she sometimes overturned, with a single dash of her white fingers, or with a single puff from her laughing lips, the edifice which had exhausted Malicorne's patience for a month.

Love apart, Malicorne was happy ; but this love, which he could not help feeling, he had the strength to conceal with care ; persuaded that at the least relaxing of the ties by which he had bound his Protean female, the demon would overthrow him and laugh at him. He humbled his mistress by disdaining her. Burning with desire, when she advanced to tempt him, he had the art to appear ice, persuaded that if he opened his arms, she would run away laughing at him. On her side, Montalais believed she did not love Malicorne ; whilst, on the contrary, in reality she did. Malicorne repeated to her so often his protestation of indifference, that she finished, sometimes, by believing him ; and then she believed she detested Malicorne. If she tried to bring him back by coquetry, Malicorne played the coquette better than she could. But what made Montalais hold to Malicorne in an indissoluble fashion, was that Malicorne always came cram full of fresh news from the court and the city ; Malicorne always brought to Blois a fashion, a secret, or a perfume ; that Malicorne never asked for a meeting, but, on the contrary, required to be supplicated to receive the favors he burned to obtain. On her side, Montalais was no miser with stories. By her means, Malicorne learnt all that passed at Blois, in the family of the dowager Madame ; and he related to Manicamp tales that made him ready to die with laughing, which the latter, out of idleness, took ready-made to M. de Guiche, who carried them to Monsieur.

Such, in two words, was the woof of petty interests

and petty conspiracies which united Blois with Orleans, and Orleans with Paris; and which was about to bring into the last named city, where she was to produce so great a revolution, the poor little La Vallière, who was far from suspecting, as she returned joyfully, leaning on the arm of her mother, for what a strange future she was reserved. As to the good man, Malicorne—we speak of the syndic of Orleans—he did not see more clearly into the present than others did into the future; and had no suspicion as he walked, every day, between three and five o'clock, after his dinner, upon the Place Sainte-Catherine, in his gray coat, cut after the fashion of Louis XIII. and his cloth shoes with great knots of ribbon, that it was he who was paying for all those bursts of laughter, all those stolen kisses, all those whisperings, all those little keepsakes, and all those bubble projects which formed a chain of forty-five leagues in length, from the palais of Blois to the Palais-Royal.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MANICAMP AND MALICORNE.

MALICORNE, then, left Blois, as we have said, and went to find his friend Manicamp, then in temporary retreat in the city of Orleans. It was just at the moment when that young nobleman was employed in selling the last decent clothing he had left. He had, a fortnight before, extorted from the Comte de Guiche a hundred pistoles, all he had, to assist in equipping him properly to go and meet Madame, on her arrival at Havre. He had drawn from Malicorne, three days before, fifty pistoles, the price of the *brevet* obtained for Montalais. He had then no ex-

pectation of anything else, having exhausted all his resources, with the exception of selling a handsome suit of cloth and satin, embroidered and laced with gold, which had been the admiration of the court. But to be able to sell this suit, the last he had left,—as we have been forced to confess to the reader—Manicamp had been obliged to take to his bed. No more fire, no more pocket-money, no more walking-money, nothing but sleep to take the place of repasts, companies and balls. It has been said—“He who sleeps, dines ;” but it has never been affirmed—He who sleeps, plays—or, He who sleeps, dances. Manicamp, reduced to this extremity of neither playing nor dancing, for a week at least, was, consequently, very sad ; he was expecting a usurer, and saw Malicorne enter. A cry of distress escaped him.

“Eh! what!” said he, in a tone which nothing can describe, “is that you again, dear friend?”

“Humph! you are very polite!” said Malicorne.

“Ay, but look you, I was expecting money, and, instead of money, I see *you*.”

“And suppose I brought you some money?”

“Oh! that would be quite another thing. You are very welcome, my dear friend!”

And he held out his hand, not for the hand of Malicorne, but for the purse. Malicorne pretended to be mistaken, and gave him his hand.

“And the money?” said Manicamp.

“My dear friend, if you wish to have it, earn it.”

“What must be done for it?”

“Earn it, *parbleu!*”

“And after what fashion?”

“Oh! that is rather trying, I warn you.”

“The devil!”

“You must get out of bed, and go immediately to M. le Comte de Guiche.”

"I get up!" said Manicamp, stretching himself in his bed, complacently, "oh, no, thank you!"

"You have sold all your clothes?"

"No, I have one suit left, the handsomest even, but I expect a purchaser."

"And the *chausses*?"

"Well, if you look, you will see them on that chair."

"Very well! since you have some *chausses* and a *pourpoint* left, put your legs into the first and your back into the other; have a horse saddled, and set off."

"Not I."

"And why not?"

"*Morbleu!* don't you know, then, that M. de Guiche is at Etampes?"

"No, I thought he was at Paris. You will then only have fifteen leagues to go, instead of thirty."

"You are a wonderfully clever fellow! If I were to ride fifteen leagues in these clothes, they would never be fit to put on again; and, instead of selling them for thirty pistoles, I should be obliged to take fifteen."

"Sell them for what you like, but I must have a second commission of maid of honor."

"Good! for whom? Is Montalais doubled then?"

"Vile fellow! It is you who are doubled. You swallow up two fortunes—mine, and that of M. le Comte de Guiche."

"You should say that of M. le Comte de Guiche and yours."

"That is true; honor where it is due; but I return to my *brevet*."

"And you are wrong."

"Prove me that."

"My friend, there will only be twelve maids of honor for madame; I have already obtained for you what

twelve hundred women are trying for, and for that I was forced to employ all my diplomacy."

"Oh! yes, I know you have been quite heroic, my dear friend."

"We know what we are about," said Manicamp.

"To whom do you tell that? When I am king, I promise you one thing."

"What? To call yourself Malicorne the first?"

"No; to make you superintendent of my finances; but that is not the question now."

"Unfortunately."

"The present affair is to procure for me a second place of maid of honor."

"My friend, if you were to promise me the price of heaven, I would decline to disturb myself at this moment." Malicorne chinked the money in his pocket.

"There are twenty pistoles here," said Malicorne.

"And what would you do with twenty pistoles, *mon Dieu!*"

"Well!" said Malicorne, a little angrily, "suppose I were to add them to the five hundred you already owe me?"

"You are right," replied Manicamp, stretching out his hand again, "and from that point of view I can accept them. Give them to me."

"An instant, what the devil! it is not only holding out your hand that will do; if I give you the twenty pistoles, shall I have my *brevet*?"

"To be sure you shall."

"Soon?"

"To-day."

"Oh! take care! Monsieur de Manicamp; you undertake much, and I do not ask that. Thirty leagues in a day is too much, you would kill yourself."

"I think nothing impossible when obliging a friend."

"You are quite heroic."

"Where are the twenty pistoles?"

"Here they are," said Malicorne, showing them.

"That's well."

"Yes, but my dear M. Manicamp, you would consume them in post-horses alone!"

"No, no, make yourself easy on that score."

"Pardon me. Why, it is fifteen leagues from this place to Etampes?"

"Fourteen."

"Well! fourteen be it; fourteen leagues make seven posts; at twenty *sous* the post, seven *livres*; seven *livres* the courier, fourteen; as many for coming back, twenty-eight! as much for bed and supper, that makes sixty *livres* this complaisance would cost."

Manicamp stretched himself like a serpent in his bed, and fixing his two great eyes upon Malicorne, "You are right," said he; "I could not return before to-morrow;" and he took the twenty pistoles.

"Now, then, be off!"

"Well, as I cannot be back before to-morrow, we have time."

"Time for what?"

"Time to play."

"What do you wish to play with?"

"Your twenty pistoles, *pardieu!*"

"No; you always win."

"I will wager them, then."

"Against what?"

"Against twenty others."

"And what shall be the object of the wager?"

"This. We have said it was fourteen leagues to Etampes?"

"Yes."

"And fourteen leagues back?"

"Doubtless."

"Well; for these twenty-eight leagues you cannot allow less than fourteen hours?"

"That is agreed."

"One hour to find the Comte de Guiche."

"Go on."

"And an hour to persuade him to write a letter to monsieur."

"Just so."

"Sixteen hours in all?"

"You reckon as well as M. Colbert."

"It is now twelve o'clock."

"Half-past."

"*Hein!*—you have a handsome watch!"

"What were you saying?" said Malicorne, putting his watch quickly back into his fob.

"Ah! true; I was offering to lay you twenty pistoles against these you have lent me, that you will have the Comte de Guiche's letter in——"

"How soon?"

"In eight hours."

"Have you a winged horse, then?"

"That is no matter. Will you bet?"

"I shall have the Comte's letter in eight hours?"

"Yes."

"In hand?"

"In hand."

"Well, be it so; I lay," said Malicorne, curious to know how this seller of clothes would get through.

"Is it agreed?"

"It is."

"Pass me the pen, ink, and paper."

"Here they are."

"Thank you."

Manicamp raised himself with a sigh, and leaning on

his left elbow, in his best hand, traced the following lines :—

“Good for an order for a place of maid of honor to Madame, which M. le Comte de Guiche will take upon him to obtain at sight.

“DE MANICAMP.”

This painful task accomplished, he laid himself down in bed again.

“Well!” asked Malicorne, “what does this mean?”

“That means that if you are in a hurry to have the letter from the Comte de Guiche for Monsieur, I have won my wager.”

“How the devil is that?”

“That is transparent enough, I think; you take that paper.”

“Well?”

“And you set out instead of me.”

“Ah!”

“You put your horses to their best speed.”

“Good!”

“In six hours you will be at Etampes; in seven hours you have the letter from the comte, and I shall have won my wager without stirring from my bed, which suits me and you too, at the same time, I am very sure.”

“Decidedly, Manicamp, you are a great man.”

“*Hein!* I know that.”

“I am to start then for Etampes?”

“Directly.”

“I am to go to the Comte de Guiche with this order?”

“He will give you a similar one for Monsieur.”

“Monsieur will approve?”

“Instantly.”

“And I shall have my *brevet*?”

“You will.”

"Ah!"

"Well, I hope I behave genteelly?"

"Adorably."

"Thank you."

"You do as you please, then, with the Comte de Guiche, Malicorne?"

"Except making money of him—everything?"

"*Diable!* the exception is annoying; but then, if instead of asking him for money, you were to ask——"

"What?"

"Something important."

"What do you call important?"

"Well! suppose one of your friends asked you to render him a service?"

"I would not render it to him."

"Selfish fellow!"

"Or at least I would ask him what service he would render me in exchange."

"Ah! that, perhaps, is fair. Well, that friend speaks to you."

"What, you, Malicorne?"

"Yes; I."

"Ah! ah! you are rich, then?"

"I have still fifty pistoles left."

"Exactly the sum I want. Where are those fifty pistoles?"

"Here," said Malicorne, slapping his pocket.

"Then speak, my friend; what do you want?"

Malicorne took up the pen, ink, and paper again, and presented them all to Manicamp. "Write!" said he.

"Dictate!"

"An order for a place in the household of Monsieur."

"Oh!" said Manicamp, laying down the pen, "a place in the household of Monsieur for fifty pistoles?"

"You mistook me, my friend; you did not hear plainly."

"What did you say, then?"

"I said five hundred."

"And the five hundred?"

"Here they are."

Manicamp devoured the rouleau with his eyes ; but this time Malicorne held it at a distance.

"Eh! what do you say to that? Five hundred pistoles."

"I say it is for nothing, my friend," said Manicamp, taking up the pen again, "and you exhaust my credit. Dictate."

Malicorne continued :

"Which my friend the Comte de Guiche will obtain for my friend Malicorne."

"That's it," said Manicamp.

"Pardon me, you have forgotten to sign."

"Ah! that is true. The five hundred pistoles?"

"Here are two hundred and fifty of them."

"And the other two hundred and fifty?"

"When I am in possession of my place."

Manicamp made a face.

"In that case give me the recommendation back again."

"What to do?"

"To add two words to it."

"Two words?"

"Yes; two words only."

"What are they?"

"In haste."

Malicorne returned the recommendation; Manicamp added the words.

"Good," said Malicorne, taking back the paper.

Manicamp began to count out the pistoles.

"There want twenty," said he.

"How so?"

"The twenty I have won."

"In what way?"

"By laying that you would have the letter from the Comte De Guiche in eight hours."

"Ah! that's fair," and he gave him the twenty pistoles.

Manicamp began to scoop up his gold by handfuls, and pour it in cascades upon his bed.

"This second place," murmured Malicorne, whilst drying his paper, "which, at the first glance, appears to cost me more than the first, but——" He stopped, took up the pen in his turn, and wrote to Montalais:—

"MADEMOISELLE,—Announce to your friend that her commission will not be long before it arrives; I am setting out to get it signed: that will be twenty-eight leagues I shall have gone for the love of you."

Then with his sardonic smile, taking up the interrupted sentence:—"This place," said he, "at the first glance, appears to cost more than the first; but—the benefit will be, I hope, in proportion with the expense, and Mademoiselle de la Vallière will bring me back more than Mademoiselle de Montalais, or else,—or else my name is not Malicorne. Farewell, Manicamp," and he left the room.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COURTYARD OF THE HÔTEL GRAMMONT.

ON Malicorne's arrival at Orleans, he was informed that the Comte de Guiche had just set out for Paris. Malicorne rested himself for a couple of hours, and then prepared to continue his journey. He reached Paris during the night, and alighted at a small hotel, where, in his previous journeys to the capital, he had been accustomed

to put up, and at eight o'clock the next morning presented himself at the Hôtel Grammont. Malicorne arrived just in time, for the Count de Guiche was on the point of taking leave of Monsieur before setting out for Havre, where the principal members of the French nobility had gone to await Madame's arrival from England. Malicorne pronounced the name of Manicamp, and was immediately admitted. He found the Comte de Guiche in the courtyard of the Hôtel Grammont, inspecting his horses, which his trainers and equerries were passing in review before him. The count, in the presence of his tradespeople and of his servants, was engaged in praising or blaming, as the case seemed to deserve, the appointments, horses, and harness that were being submitted to him: when, in the midst of this important occupation, the name of Manicamp was announced.

"Manicamp!" he exclaimed: "let him enter by all means." And he advanced a few steps toward the door.

Malicorne slipped through the half-open door, and looking at the Comte de Guiche, who was surprised to see a face he did not recognize, instead of the one he expected, said: "Forgive me, monsieur le comte, but I believe a mistake has been made. M. Manicamp himself was announced to you, instead of which it is only an envoy from him."

"Ah!" exclaimed De Guiche, coldly; "and what do you bring me?"

"A letter, monsieur le comte." Malicorne handed him the first document, and narrowly watched the count's face, who, as he read it, began to laugh.

"What!" he exclaimed, "another maid of honor? Are all the maids of honor in France, then, under his protection?"

Malicorne bowed. "Why does he not come himself?" he inquired.

"He is confined to his bed."

"The deuce! he has no money then, I suppose," said De Guiche, shrugging his shoulders. "What does he do with his money?"

Malicorne made a movement, to indicate that upon this subject he was as ignorant as the count himself. "Why does he not make use of his credit, then?" continued De Guiche.

"With regard to that, I think——"

"What?"

"That Manicamp has credit with no one but yourself, monsieur le comte."

"He will not be at Havre, then?" Whereupon Malicorne made another movement.

"But every one will be there."

"I trust, monsieur le comte, that he will not neglect so excellent an opportunity."

"He should be at Paris by this time."

"He will take the direct road perhaps to make up for lost time."

"Where is he now?"

"At Orleans."

"Monsieur," said De Guiche, "you seem to me a man of very good taste."

Malicorne was wearing some of Manicamp's old-new clothes. He bowed in return, saying, "You do me a very great honor, monsieur le comte."

"Whom have I the pleasure of addressing?"

"My name is Malicorne, monsieur."

"M. de Malicorne, what do you think of these pistol-holsters?"

Malicorne was a man of great readiness, and immediately understood the position of affairs. Besides, the "de" which had been prefixed to his name, raised him to the rank of the person with whom he was conversing.

He looked at the holsters with the air of a connoisseur, and said, without hesitation: "Somewhat heavy, monsieur."

"You see," said De Guiche to the saddler, "this gentleman, who understands these matters well, thinks the holsters heavy, a complaint I had already made." The saddler was full of excuses.

"What do you think," asked de Guiche, "of this horse, which I have just purchased?"

"To look at it, it seems perfect, monsieur le comte; but I must mount it before I give you my opinion."

"Do so, M. de Malicorne, and ride him round the court two or three times."

The courtyard of the hotel was so arranged, that whenever there was any occasion for it, it could be used as a riding-school. Malicorne, with perfect ease, arranged the bridle and snaffle-reins, placed his left hand on the horse's mane, and, with his foot in the stirrup, raised himself and seated himself in the saddle. At first, he made the horse walk the whole circuit of the courtyard at a foot-pace; next at a trot; lastly at a gallop. He then drew up close to the count, dismounted, and threw the bridle to a groom standing by. "Well," said the count, "what do you think of it, M. de Malicorne?"

"This horse, monsieur le comte, is of the Mecklenburg breed. In looking whether the bit suited his mouth, I saw that he was rising seven, the very age when the training of a horse intended for a charger should commence. The fore-hand is light. A horse which holds its head high, it is said, never tires his rider's hand. The withers are rather low. The drooping of the hind-quarters would almost make me doubt the purity of its German breed, and I think there is English blood in him. He stands well on his legs, but he trots high, and may cut himself, which requires attention to be paid to his shoeing. He is tract-

able ; and as I made him turn round and change his feet, I found him quick and ready in doing so."

"Well said, M. de Malicorne," exclaimed the comte ; "you are a judge of horses, I perceive ;" then, turning towards him again, he continued, "you are most becomingly dressed, M. de Malicorne. That is not a provincial cut, I presume. Such a style of dress is not to be met with at Tours or Orleans."

"No, monsieur le comte ; my clothes were made at Paris.

"There is no doubt about that. But let us resume our own affair. Manicamp wishes for the appointment of a second maid of honor."

"You perceive what he has written, monsieur le comte."

"For whom was the first appointment?"

Malicorne felt the color rise in his face as he answered hurriedly.

"A charming maid of honor, Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Ah, ah ! you are acquainted with her?"

"We are affianced, or nearly so."

"That is quite another thing, then ; a thousand compliments," exclaimed De Guiche, upon whose lips a courtier's jest was already fitting, but to whom the word "affianced," addressed by Malicorne with respect to Mademoiselle de Montalais, recalled the respect due to women.

"And for whom is the second appointment destined?" asked De Guiche ; "is it for any one to whom Manicamp may happen to be affianced ? In that case I pity her, poor girl ! for she will have a sad fellow for a husband."

"No, monsieur le comte ; the second appointment is for Mademoiselle de la Baume le Blanc de la Vallière."

"Unknown," said De Guiche.

"Unknown ? yes, monsieur," said Malicorne, smiling in his turn.

"Very good. I will speak to Monsieur about it. By the by, she is of gentle birth?"

"She belongs to a very good family, and is maid of honor to Madame."

"That's well. Will you accompany me to Monsieur?"

"Most certainly, if I may be permitted the honor."

"Have you your carriage?"

"No; I came here on horseback."

"Dressed as you are?"

"No, monsieur; I posted from Orleans, and I changed my traveling suit for the one I have on, in order to present myself to you."

"True, you already told me you had come from Orleans;" saying which he crumpled Manicamp's letter in his hand, and thrust it in his pocket.

"I beg your pardon," said Malicorne, timidly; "but I do not think you have read all."

"Not read all, do you say?"

"No; there were two letters in the same envelope."

"Oh! are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Let us look, then," said the count, as he opened the letter again.

"Ah! you are right," he said, opening the paper which he had not yet read.

"I suspected it," he continued—"another application for an appointment under Monsieur. This Manicamp is a regular vampire:—he is carrying on a trade in it."

"No, monsieur le comte, he wishes to make a present of it."

"To whom?"

"To myself, monsieur."

"Why did you not say so at once, my dear M. Mauvaisecorne?"

"Malicorne, monsieur le comte."

"Forgive me; it is the Latin that bothers me—that terrible mine of etymologies. Why the deuce are young men of family taught Latin? *Mala* and *mauvaise*—you understand it is the same thing. You will forgive me, I trust, M. de Malicorne."

"Your kindness affects me much, monsieur: but it is a reason why I should make you acquainted with one circumstance without any delay."

"What is it?"

"That I was not born a gentleman. I am not without courage, and not altogether deficient in ability; but my name is Malicorne simply."

"You appear to me, monsieur!" exclaimed the count, looking at the astute face of his companion, "to be a most agreeable man. Your face pleases me, M. Malicorne, and you must possess some indisputably excellent qualities to have pleased that egotistical Manicamp. Be candid and tell me whether you are not some saint descended upon the earth."

"Why so?"

"For the simple reason that he makes you a present of anything. Did you not say that he intended to make you a present of some appointment in the king's household?"

"I beg your pardon, count; but, if I succeed in obtaining the appointment, you, and not he, will have bestowed it on me."

"Besides, he will not have given it to you for nothing, I suppose. Stay, I have it;—there is a Malicorne at Orleans, who lends money to the prince."

"I think that must be my father, monsieur."

"Ah! the prince has the father, and that terrible dragon of a Manicamp has the son. Take care, monsieur; I know him. He will flecce you completely."

"The only difference is, that I lend without interest," said Malicorne, smiling.

"I was correct in saying you were either a saint or very much resembled one. M. Malicorne, you shall have the post you want, or I will forfeit my name."

"Ah! monsieur le comte, what a debt of gratitude shall I not owe you?" said Malicorne, transported.

"Let us go to the prince, my dear M. Malicorne." And De Guiche proceeded toward the door, desiring Malicorne to follow him. At the very moment they were about to cross the threshold, a young man appeared on the other side. He was from twenty-four to twenty-five years of age, of pale complexion, bright eyes, and brown hair and eyebrows. "Good-day," he said, suddenly, almost pushing De Guiche back into the courtyard again.

"Is that you, De Wardes?—What! and booted, spurred and whip in hand, too?"

"The most befitting costume for a man about to set off for Havre. There will be no one left in Paris to-morrow." And hereupon he saluted Malicorne with great ceremony, whose handsome dress gave him the appearance of a prince.

"M. Malicorne," said De Guiche to his friend. De Wardes bowed.

"M. de Wardes," said Guiche to Malicorne, who bowed in return. "By the by, De Wardes," continued De Guiche, "you who are so well acquainted with these matters, can you tell us, probably, what appointments are still vacant at the court; or rather in the prince's household?"

"In the prince's household," said De Wardes, looking up with an air of consideration, "let me see—the appointment of the master of the horse is vacant, I believe."

"Oh," said Malicorne, "there is no question of such a post as that, monsieur; my ambition is not nearly so exalted."

De Wardes had a more penetrating observation than De Guiche, and fathomed Malicorne immediately. "The

fact is," he said, looking at him from head to foot, "a man must be either a duke or a peer to fill that post."

"All I solicit," said Malicorne, "is a very humble appointment; I am of little importance, and I do not rank myself above my position."

"M. Malicorne, whom you see here," said De Guiche to De Wardes, "is a very excellent fellow, whose only misfortune is that of not being of gentle birth. As far as I am concerned, you know, I attach little value to those who have but gentle birth to boast of."

"Assuredly," said De Wardes; "but will you allow me to remark, my dear count, that, without rank of some sort, one can hardly hope to belong to his royal highness's household."

"You are right," said the count, "court etiquette is absolute. The devil!—we never so much as gave it a thought."

"Alas! a sad misfortune for me, monsieur le comte," said Malicorne, changing color.

"Yet not without remedy, I hope," returned De Guiche.

"The remedy is found easily enough," exclaimed De Wardes; you can be created a gentleman. His Eminence the Cardinal Mazarin did nothing else from morning till night."

"Hush, hush, De Wardes," said the count; "no jests of that kind; it ill becomes us to turn such matters into ridicule. Letters of nobility, it is true, are purchasable; but that is a sufficient misfortune without the nobles themselves laughing at it."

"Upon my word, De Guiche, you're quite a Puritan, as the English say."

At this moment the Vicomte de Bragelonne was announced by one of the servants in the courtyard, in precisely the same manner as he would have done in a room.

"Come here, my dear Raoul. What! you, too, booted and spurred? You are setting off, then?"

Bragelonne approached the group of young men, and saluted them with that quiet and serious manner peculiar to him. His salutation was principally addressed to De Wardes, with whom he was unacquainted, and whose features, on his perceiving Raoul, had assumed a strange sternness of expression. "I have come, De Guiche," he said, "to ask your companionship. We set off for Havre, I presume."

"This is admirable—delightful. We shall have a most enjoyable journey. M. Malicorne, M. Bragelonne—ah! M. de Wardes, let me present you." The young men saluted each other in a restrained manner. Their very natures seemed, from the beginning, disposed to take exception to each other. De Wardes was pliant, subtle, full of dissimulation; Raoul was calm, grave, and upright. "Decide between us—between De Wardes and myself, Raoul."

"Upon what subject?"

"Upon the subject of noble birth."

"Who can be better informed on that subject than a De Grammont?"

"No compliments; it is your opinion I ask."

"At least, inform me of the subject under discussion."

"De Wardes asserts that the distribution of titles is abused; I, on the contrary, maintain that a title is useless to the man on whom it is bestowed."

"And you are correct," said Bragelonne, quietly.

"But, monsieur le vicomte," interrupted De Wardes, with a kind of obstinacy, "I affirm that it is I who am correct."

"What was your opinion, monsieur?"

"I was saying that everything is done in France at the present moment, to humiliate men of family."

"And by whom?"

"By the king himself. He surrounds himself with people who cannot show four quarterings."

"Nonsense," said De Guiche; "where could you possibly have seen that, De Wardes?"

"One example will suffice," he returned, directing his look fully upon Raoul.

"State it then."

"Do you know who has just been nominated captain-general of the musketeers—an appointment more valuable than a peerage; for it gives precedence over all the *maréchals* of France?"

Raoul's color mounted in his face; for he saw the object De Wardes had in view. "No; who has been appointed? In any case it must have been very recently, for the appointment was vacant eight days ago; a proof of which is, that the king refused Monsieur, who solicited the post for one of his *protégés*."

"Well, the king refused it to Monsieur's *protégé*, in order to bestow it upon the Chevalier d'Artagnan, a younger brother of some Gascon family, who has been trailing his sword in the antechambers during the last thirty years."

"Forgive me if I interrupt you," said Raoul, darting a glance full of severity at De Wardes: "but you give me the impression of being unacquainted with the gentleman of whom you are speaking."

"I not acquainted with M. d'Artagnan? Can you tell me, monsieur, who does *not* know him?"

"Those who *do* know him, monsieur," replied Raoul, with still greater calmness and sternness of manner, "are in the habit of saying, that if he is not as good a gentleman as the king—which is not his fault—he is the equal of all the kings of the earth in courage and loyalty."

Such is my opinion, monsieur; and I thank heaven I have known M. d'Artagnan from my birth."

De Wardes was about to reply, when De Guiche interrupted him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PORTRAIT OF MADAME.

THE discussion was becoming full of bitterness. De Guiche perfectly understood the whole matter, for there was in Bragelonne's face a look instinctively hostile, while in that of De Wardes there was something like a determination to offend. Without inquiring into the different feelings which actuated his two friends, De Guiche resolved to ward off the blow which he felt was on the point of being dealt by one of them, and perhaps by both. "Gentlemen," he said, "we must take our leave of each other, I must pay a visit to Monsieur. You, De Wardes, will accompany me to the Louvre, and you, Raoul, will remain here master of the house; and as all that is done here is under your advice, you will bestow the last glance upon my preparations for departure."

Raoul, with the air of one who neither seeks nor fears a quarrel, bowed his head in token of assent, and seated himself upon a bench in the sun. "That is well," said De Guiche, "remain where you are, Raoul, and tell them to show you the two horses I have just purchased; you will give me your opinion, for I only bought them on condition that you ratified the purchase. By the by, I have to beg your pardon for having omitted to inquire after the Comte de la Fère." While pronouncing these latter words, he closely observed De Wardes, in order

to perceive what effect the name of Raoul's father would produce upon him. "I thank you," answered the young man, "the count is very well." A gleam of deep hatred passed into De Wardes' eyes. De Guiche, who appeared not to notice the foreboding expression, went up to Raoul, and grasping him by the hand, said,—“It is agreed, then, Bragelonne, is it not, that you will rejoin us in the courtyard of the Palais-Royal?” He then signed to De Wardes to follow him who had been engaged in balancing himself first on one foot, then on the other. “We are going,” said he, “come, M. Malicorne.” This name made Raoul start; for it seemed that he had already heard it pronounced before, but he could not remember on what occasion. While trying to recall it half-dreamily, yet half-irritated at his conversation with De Wardes, the three young men set out on their way towards the Palais-Royal, where Monsieur was residing. Malicorne learned two things; the first, that the young men had something to say to each other; and the second, that he ought not to walk in the same line with them; and therefore he walked behind. “Are you mad?” said De Guiche to his companion, as soon as they had left the Hôtel de Grammont; “you attack M. d'Artagnan, and that, too, before Raoul.”

“Well,” said De Wardes, “what then?”

“What do you mean by ‘what then?’”

“Certainly, is there any prohibition against attacking M. d'Artagnan?”

“But you know very well that M. d'Artagnan was one of those celebrated and terrible four men who were called the musketeers.”

“That they may be: but I do not perceive why, on that account, I should be forbidden to hate M. d'Artagnan.”

“What cause has he given you?”

“Me! personally, none.”

"Why hate him, therefore?"

"Ask my dead father that question."

"Really, my dear De Wardes, you surprise me. M. d'Artagnan is not one to leave unsettled any *enmity* he may have to arrange, without completely clearing his account. Your father, I have heard, on his side, carried matters with a high hand. Moreover, there are no enmities so bitter that they cannot be washed away by blood, by a good sword-thrust loyally given."

"Listen to me, my dear De Guiche, this inveterate dislike existed between my father and M. d'Artagnan, and when I was quite a child, he acquainted me with the reason for it, and, as forming part of my inheritance, I regard it as a particular legacy bestowed upon me."

"And does this hatred concern M. d'Artagnan alone?"

"As for that, M. d'Artagnan was so intimately associated with his three friends, that some portion of the full measure of my hatred falls to their lot, and that hatred is of such a nature; whenever the opportunity occurs, they shall have no occasion to complain of their allowance."

De Guiche had kept his eyes fixed on De Wardes, and shuddered at the bitter manner in which the young man smiled. Something like a presentiment flashed across his mind; he knew that the time had passed away for *grands coups entre gentilshommes*; but that the feeling of hatred treasured up in the mind, instead of being diffused abroad, was still hatred all the same; that a smile was sometimes as full of meaning as a threat; and, in a word, that to the fathers who had hated with their hearts and fought with their arms, would now succeed the sons, who would indeed hate with their hearts, but would no longer combat their enemies, save by means of intrigue or treachery. As, therefore, it certainly was not Raoul whom he could suspect either of intrigue or treachery, it was on Raoul's account that De Guiche trembled. However, while these

gloomy forebodings cast a shade of anxiety over De Guiche's countenance, De Wardes had resumed the entire mastery over himself.

"At all events," he observed, "I have no personal ill-will towards M. de Bragelonne; I do not know him even."

"In any case," said De Guiche, with a certain amount of severity in his tone of voice, "do not forget one circumstance, that Raoul is my most intimate friend;" a remark at which De Wardes bowed.

The conversation terminated there, although De Guiche tried his utmost to draw out his secret from him; but, doubtless, De Wardes had determined to say nothing further, and he remained impenetrable. De Guiche therefore promised himself a more satisfactory result with Raoul. In the mean time they had reached the Palais-Royal, which was surrounded by a crowd of lookers-on. The household belonging to Monsieur awaited his command to mount their horses, in order to form part of the escort of the ambassadors, to whom had been intrusted the care of bringing the young princess to Paris. The brilliant display of horses, arms, and rich liveries, afforded some compensation in those times, thanks to the kindly feelings of the people, and to the traditions of deep devotion to their sovereigns, for the enormous expenses charged upon the taxes. Mazarin had said: "Let them sing, provided they pay;" while Louis XIV.'s remark was, "Let them look." Sight had replaced the voice; the people could still look, but they were no longer allowed to sing. De Guiche left De Wardes and Malicorne at the bottom of the grand staircase, while he himself, who shared the favor and good graces of Monsieur with the Chevalier de Lorraine, who always smiled at him most affectionately, though he could not endure him, went straight to the prince's apartments, whom he found engaged in admiring himself in the glass, and rouging his face. In a corner of the cabinet, the

Chevalier de Lorraine was extended full length upon some cushions, having just had his long hair curled, with which he was playing in the same manner a woman would have done. The prince turned round as the count entered, and perceiving who it was, said: "Ah! is that you, Guiche; come here and tell me the truth."

"You know, my lord, it is one of my defects to speak the truth."

"You will hardly believe, De Guiche, how that wicked chevalier has annoyed me."

The chevalier shrugged his shoulders.

"Why, he pretends," continued the prince, "that Mademoiselle Henrietta is better looking as a woman than I am as a man."

"Do not forget, my lord," said De Guiche, frowning slightly, "you require me to speak the truth?"

"Certainly," said the prince, tremblingly.

"Well, and I shall tell it you."

"Do not be in a hurry, Guiche," exclaimed the prince, "you have plenty of time; look at me attentively, and try to recollect Madame. Besides, her portrait is here. Look at it." And he held out to him a miniature of the finest possible execution. De Guiche took it, and looked at it for a long time attentively.

"Upon my honor, my lord, this is indeed a most lovely face."

"But look at me, count, look at *me*," said the prince, endeavoring to direct upon himself the attention of the count, who was completely absorbed in contemplation of the portrait.

"It is wonderful," murmured Guiche.

"Really, one would almost imagine you had never seen the young lady before."

"It is true, my lord, I have seen her, but it was five years ago; there is a great difference between a child twelve years old and a girl of seventeen."

"Well, what is your opinion?"

"My opinion is that the portrait must be flattering my lord."

"Of that," said the prince triumphantly, "there can be no doubt; but let us suppose that it is not, what would your opinion be?"

"My lord, that your highness is exceedingly happy to have so charming a bride."

"Very well, that is your opinion of her, but of me?"

"My opinion, my lord, is that you are too handsome for a man."

The Chevalier de Lorraine burst out laughing. The prince understood how severe towards himself this opinion of the Comte de Guiche was, and he looked somewhat displeased, saying, "My friends are not over indulgent." De Guiche looked at the portrait again, and, after lengthened contemplation, returned it with apparent unwillingness, saying, "Most decidedly, my lord, I should rather prefer to look ten times at your highness, than to look at Madame once again. It seemed as if the chevalier had detected some mystery in these words, which were incomprehensible to the prince, for he exclaimed: "Very well, get married yourself." Monsieur continued painting himself, and when he had finished, looked at the portrait again once more turned to admire himself in the glass, and smiled, and no doubt was satisfied with the comparison. "You are very kind to have come," he said to Guiche, "I feared you would leave without bidding me adieu."

"Your highness knows me too well to believe me capable of so great a disrespect."

"Besides, I suppose you have something to ask from me before leaving Paris?"

"Your highness has indeed guessed correctly, for I have a request to make."

"Very good, what is it?"

The Chevalier de Lorraine immediately displayed the greatest attention, for he regarded every favor conferred upon another as a robbery committed against himself. And, as Guiche hesitated, the prince said: "If it be money, nothing could be more fortunate, for I am in funds; the superintendent of the finances has sent me 500,000 pistoles."

"I thank your highness; but it is not an affair of money."

"What is it, then? Tell me."

"The appointment of a maid of honor."

"Oh! oh! Guiche, what a protector you have become of young ladies," said the prince, "you never speak of any one else now."

The Chevalier de Lorraine smiled, for he knew very well that nothing displeased the prince more than to show any interest in ladies. "My lord," said the Comte, "it is not I who am directly interested in the lady of whom I have just spoken; I am acting on behalf of one of my friends."

"Ah! that is different; what is the name of the young lady in whom your friend is interested?"

"Mlle. de la Baume le Blanc de la Vallière; she is already maid of honor to the dowager princess."

"Why, she is lame," said the Chevalier de Lorraine, stretching himself on his cushions.

"Lame," repeated the prince, "and Madame to have her constantly before her eyes? Most certainly not, may be dangerous for her when in an interesting condition,"

The Chevalier de Lorraine burst out laughing.

"Chevalier," said Guiche, "your conduct is ungenerous; while I am soliciting a favor, you do me all the mischief you can."

"Forgive me, comte," said the Chevalier de Lorraine, somewhat uneasy at the tone in which Guiche had made his remark, "but I had no intention of doing so, and I be-

gin to believe that I have mistaken one young lady for another."

"There is no doubt of it, monsieur; and I do not hesitate to declare that such is the case."

"Do you attach much importance to it, Guiche?" inquired the prince.

"I do, my lord."

"Well, you shall have it; but ask me for no more appointments, for there are none to give away."

"Ah!" exclaimed the chevalier, "midday already, that is the hour fixed for the departure."

"You dismiss me, monsieur?" inquired Guiche.

"Really, count, you treat me very ill to-day," replied the chevalier.

"For heaven's sake, count, for heaven's sake, chevalier," said Monsieur, "do you not see how you are distressing me."

"Your highness's signature?" said Guiche.

"Take a blank appointment from that drawer, and give it to me." Guiche handed the prince the document indicated, and at the same time presented him with a pen already dipped in ink; whereupon the prince signed. "Here," he said returning him the appointment, "but I give it on one condition."

"Name it."

"That you make friends with the chevalier."

"Willingly," said Guiche. And he held out his hand to the chevalier with an indifference amounting to contempt.

"Adieu, count," said the chevalier, without seeming in any way to have noticed the count's slight; "adieu, and bring us back a princess who will not talk with her own portrait too much."

"Yes, set off and lose no time. By the by, who accompany you?"

"Bragelonne and De Wardes."

"Both excellent and fearless companions."

"Too fearless," said the chevalier; "endeavor to bring them both back, count."

"A bad heart, bad!" murmured De Guiche; "he scents mischief everywhere, and sooner than anything else." And taking leave of the prince, he quitted the apartment. As soon as he reached the vestibule, he waved in the air the paper which the prince had signed. Malicorne hurried forward, and received it, trembling with delight. When, however, he held it in his hand, Guiche observed that he still awaited something further.

"Patience, monsieur," he said; "the Chevalier de Lorraine was there, and I feared an utter failure if I asked too much at once. Wait until I return. Adieu."

"Adieu, monsieur le comte; a thousand thanks," said Malicorne.

"Send Manicamp to me. By the way, monsieur, is it true that Mlle. de la Vallière is lame?" As he said this a horse drew up behind him, and on turning round he noticed that Bragelonne, who had just at that moment entered the courtyard, turned suddenly pale. The poor lover had heard the remark, which, however, was not the case with Malicorne, for he was already beyond the reach of the count's voice.

"Why is Louise's name spoken of here," said Raoul to himself; "oh! let not De Wardes, who stands smiling yonder, even say a word about her in my presence."

"Now, gentlemen," exclaimed the Comte de Guiche, "prepare to start."

At this moment the prince, who had completed his toilette, appeared at the window, and was immediately saluted by the acclamations of all who composed the escort, and ten minutes afterwards, banners, scarfs, and feathers were fluttering and waving in the air, as the cavalcade galloped away.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HAVRE.

THIS brilliant and animated company, the members of which were inspired by various feelings, arrived at Havre four days after their departure from Paris. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, and no intelligence had yet been received of Madame. They were soon engaged in quest of apartments; but the greatest confusion immediately ensued among the masters, and violent quarrels among their attendants. In the midst of this disorder, the Comte de Guiche fancied he recognized Manicamp. It was, indeed, Manicamp himself; but as Malicorne had taken possession of his very best costume, he had not been able to get any other than a suit of violet velvet, trimmed with silver. Guiche recognized him as much by his dress as by his features, for he had very frequently seen Manicamp in his violet suit, which was his last resource. Manicamp presented himself to the count under an arch of torches, which set in a blaze, rather than illuminated, the gate by which Havre is entered, and which is situated close to the tower of Francis I. The count, remarking the woe-begone expression of Manicamp's face, could not resist laughing. "Well, my poor Manicamp," he exclaimed, "how violet you look; are you in mourning?"

"Yes," replied Manicamp; "I am in mourning."

"For whom, or for what?"

"For my blue-and-gold suit, which has disappeared, and in the place of which I could find nothing but this;

and I was even obliged to economize, from compulsion, in order to get possession of it."

"Indeed?"

"It is singular you should be astonished at that, since you leave me without any money."

"At all events, here you are, and that is the principal thing."

"By the most horrible roads."

"Where are you lodging?"

"Lodging?"

"Yes!"

"I am not lodging anywhere."

De Guiche began to laugh. "Well," said he, "where do you intend to lodge?"

"In the same place you do."

"But I don't know, myself."

"What do you mean by saying you don't know?"

"Certainly, how is it likely I should know where I should stay."

"Have you not retained an hotel?"

"I?"

"Yes, you or the prince."

"Neither of us has thought of it. Havre is of considerable size, I suppose; and provided I can get a stable for a dozen horses, and a suitable house in a good quarter——"

"Certainly, there are some very excellent houses."

"Well then——"

"But not for us."

"What do you mean by saying not for us?—for whom, then?"

"For the English, of course."

"For the English?"

"Yes; the houses are all taken."

"By whom?"

"By the Duke of Buckingham."

"I beg your pardon?" said Guiche, whose attention this name had awakened.

"Yes, by the Duke of Buckingham. His Grace was preceded by a courier, who arrived here three days ago, and immediately retained all the houses fit for habitation the town possesses."

"Come, come, Manicamp, let us understand each other."

"Well, what I have told you is clear enough, it seems to me."

"But surely Buckingham does not occupy the whole of Havre?"

"He certainly does not occupy it, since he has not yet arrived; but, once disembarked, he will occupy it."

"Oh! oh!"

"It is quite clear you are not acquainted with the English; they have a perfect rage for monopolizing everything."

"That may be; but a man who has the whole of one house, is satisfied with it, and does not require two."

"Yes, but two men?"

"Be it so: for two men, two houses, or four or six, or ten, if you like; but there are a hundred houses at Havre."

"Yes, and all the hundred are let."

"Impossible!"

"What an obstinate fellow you are. I tell you Buckingham has hired all the houses surrounding the one which the queen dowager of England and the princess her daughter will inhabit."

"He is singular enough, indeed," said De Wardes, caressing his horse's neck.

"Such is the case, however, monsieur."

"You are quite sure of it, Monsieur de Manicamp!" and as he put this question, he looked slyly at De Guiche, as though to interrogate him upon the degree of confidence to be placed in his friend's state of mind. During this

discussion the night had closed in, and the torches, pages, attendants, squires, horses, and carriages, blocked up the gate and the open place; the torches were reflected in the channel, which the rising tide was gradually filling, while on the other side of the jetty might be noticed groups of curious lookers-on, consisting of sailors and townspeople, who seemed anxious to miss nothing of the spectacle. Amidst all this hesitation of purpose, Bragelonne, as though a perfect stranger to the scene, remained on his horse somewhat in the rear of Guiche, and watched the rays of light reflected on the water, inhaling with rapture the sea breezes, and listening to the waves which noisily broke upon the shore and on the beach, tossing the spray into the air with a noise that echoed in the distance. "But," exclaimed De Guiche, "what is Buckingham's motive for providing such a supply of lodgings?"

"Yes, yes," said De Wardes; "what reason has he?"

"A very excellent one," replied Manicamp.

"You know what it is, then?"

"I fancy I do."

"Tell us, then."

"Bend your head down towards me."

"What! may it not be spoken except in private?"

"You shall judge of that yourself."

"Very well." De Guiche bent down.

"Love," said Manicamp.

"I do not understand you at all."

"Say rather, you cannot understand me *yet*."

"Explain yourself."

"Very well; it is quite certain, count, that his royal highness will be the most unfortunate of husbands."

"What do you mean?"

"The Duke of Buckingham——"

"It is a name of ill omen to princes of the house of France."

"And so the duke is madly in love with Madame, so the rumor runs, and will have no one approach her but himself."

De Guiche colored. "Thank you, thank you," said he to Manicamp, grasping his hand. Then, recovering himself, added, "Whatever you do, Manicamp, be careful that this project of Buckingham's is not made known to any Frenchman here; for, if so, many a sword would be unsheathed in this country that does not fear English steel."

"But after all," said Manicamp, "I have had no satisfactory proof given me of the love in question, and it may be no more than an idle tale."

"No, no," said De Guiche, "it must be the truth;" and despite his command over himself, he clenched his teeth.

"Well," said Manicamp, "after all, what does it matter to you? What does it matter to me whether the prince is to be what the late king was? Buckingham the father for the queen, Buckingham the son for the princess."

"Manicamp! Manicamp!"

"It is a fact, or at least, everybody says so."

"Silence!" cried the count.

"But why, silence?" said De Wardes; "it is a highly creditable circumstance for the French nation. Are not you of my opinion, Monsieur de Bragelonne?"

"To what circumstance do you allude?" inquired De Bragelonne with an abstracted air.

"That the English should render homage to the beauty of our queens and our princesses."

"Forgive me, but I have not been paying attention to what has passed; will you oblige me by explaining."

"There is no doubt it was necessary that Buckingham the father should come to Paris in order that his majesty, King Louis XIII., should perceive that his wife was one of the most beautiful women of the French court; and it

seems necessary, at the present time, that Buckingham the son should consecrate, by the devotion of his worship, the beauty of a princess who has French blood in her veins. The fact of having inspired a passion on the other side of the Channel will henceforth confer a title to beauty on this."

"Sir," replied De Bragelonne, "I do not like to hear such matters treated so lightly. Gentlemen like ourselves should be careful guardians of the honor of our queens and our princesses. If we jest at them, what will our servants do?"

"How am I to understand that?" said De Wardes, whose ears tingled at the remark.

"In any way you choose, monsieur," replied De Bragelonne, coldly.

"Bragelonne, Bragelonne," murmured De Guiche.

"M. de Wardes," exclaimed Manicamp, noticing that the young man had spurred his horse close to the side of Raoul.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said De Guiche, "do not set such an example in public, in the street too. De Wardes, you are wrong."

"Wrong; in what way, may I ask?"

"You are wrong, monsieur, because you are always speaking ill of some one or something," replied Raoul, with undisturbed composure.

"Be indulgent, Raoul," said De Guiche, in an undertone.

"Pray do not think of fighting, gentlemen!" said Manicamp, "before you have rested yourselves; for in that case you will not be able to do much."

"Come," said De Guiche, "forward, gentlemen!" and breaking through the horses and attendants, he cleared the way for himself towards the center of the square, through the crowd, followed by the whole cavalcade. A large gateway looking out upon a courtyard was open;

Guiche entered the courtyard, and Bragelonne, De Wardes, Manicamp, and three or four other gentlemen, followed him. A sort of council of war was held, and the means to be employed for saving the dignity of the embassy were deliberated upon. Bragelonne was of opinion that the right of priority should be respected, while De Wardes suggested that the town should be sacked. This latter proposition appearing to Manicamp rather premature, he proposed instead that they should first rest themselves. This was the wisest thing to do, but, unhappily, to follow his advice, two things were wanting; namely, a house and beds. De Guiche reflected for awhile, and then said aloud, "Let him who loves me, follow me!"

"The attendants also?" inquired a page who had approached the group.

"Every one," exclaimed the impetuous young man. "Manicamp, show us the way to the house destined for her Royal Highness's residence."

Without in any way divining the count's project, his friends followed him, accompanied by a crowd of people, whose acclamations and delight seemed a happy omen for the success of that project with which they were yet unacquainted. The wind was blowing strongly from the harbor, and moaning in fitful gusts.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT SEA.

THE following day was somewhat calmer, although the gale still continued. The sun had, however, risen through a bank of orange clouds, tingeing with its cheerful rays the crests of the black waves. Watch was impatiently

kept from the different look-outs. Towards eleven o'clock in the morning a ship, with sails full set, was signaled as in view; two others followed at the distance of about half a knot. They approached like arrows shot from the bow of a skillful archer; and yet the sea ran so high that their speed was as nothing compared to the rolling of the billows in which the vessels were plunging first in one direction and then in another. The English fleet was soon recognized by the line of the ships, and by the color of their pennants; the one which had the princess on board and carried the admiral's flag preceded the others.

The rumor now spread that the princess was arriving. The whole French court ran to the harbor, while the quays and jetties were soon covered by crowds of people. Two hours afterwards, the other vessels had overtaken the flagship, and the three, not venturing perhaps to enter the narrow entrance of the harbor, cast anchor between Havre and La Hève. When the maneuver had been completed, the vessel which bore the admiral saluted France by twelve discharges of cannon, which were returned, discharge for discharge, from Fort Francis the First. Immediately afterwards a hundred boats were launched,—they were covered with the richest stuffs, and destined for the conveyance of the different members of the French nobility towards the vessels at anchor. But when it was observed that even inside the harbor the boats were tossed to and fro, and that beyond the jetty the waves rose mountains high, dashing upon the shore with a terrible uproar, it will readily be believed that not one of those frail boats would be able with safety to reach a fourth part of the distance between the shore and the vessels at anchor. A pilot-boat, however, notwithstanding the wind and the sea, was getting ready to leave the harbor for the purpose of placing itself at the admiral's disposal.

De Guiche, who had been looking among the different boats for one stronger than the others, which might offer a chance of reaching the English vessels, perceived the pilot-boat getting ready to start, said to Raoul: "Do you not think, Raoul, that intelligent and vigorous men, as we are, ought to be ashamed to retreat before the brute strength of wind and waves?"

"That is precisely the very reflection I was silently making to myself," replied Bragelonne.

"Shall we get into that boat, then, and push off? Will you come, De Wardes?"

"Take care, or you will get drowned," said Manicamp.

"And for no purpose," said De Wardes, "for with the wind in your teeth, as it will be, you will never reach the vessels."

"You refuse, then?"

"Assuredly I do; I would willingly risk and lose my life in an encounter against men," he said, glancing at Bragelonne, "but as to fighting with oars against waves, I have no taste for that?"

"And for myself," said Manicamp, "even were I to succeed in reaching the ships, I should not be indifferent to the loss of the only good dress which I have left,—salt water would spoil it."

"You, then, refuse also?" exclaimed De Guiche.

"Decidedly I do; I beg you to understand that most distinctly."

"But," exclaimed De Guiche, "look, De Wardes—look Manicamp—look yonder, the princesses are looking at us from the poop of the admiral's vessel."

"An additional reason, my dear fellow, why we should not make ourselves ridiculous by being drowned while they are looking on."

"Is that your last word, Manicamp?"

"Yes."

"And then yours, De Wardes ? "

" Yes."

" Then I go alone."

" Not so," said Raoul, " for I shall accompany you ; I thought it was understood I should do so."

The fact is, that Raoul, uninfluenced by devotion, measuring the risk they run, saw how imminent the danger was, but he willingly allowed himself to accept a peril which De Wardes had declined.

The boat was about to set off when De Guiche called to the pilot. " Stay," said he : " we want two places in your boat ;" and wrapping five or six pistoles in paper, he threw them from the quay into the boat.

" It seems you are not afraid of salt water, young gentlemen."

" We are afraid of nothing," replied De Guiche.

" Come along, then."

The pilot approached the side of the boat, and the two young men, one after the other, with equal vivacity, jumped into the boat. " Courage, my men," said De Guiche ; " I have twenty pistoles left in this purse, and as soon as we reach the admiral's vessel they shall be yours." The sailors bent themselves to their oars, and the boat bounded over the crest of the waves. The interest taken in this hazardous expedition was universal ; the whole population of Havre hurried towards the jetties and every look was directed towards the little bark ; at one moment it flew suspended on the crest of the foaming waves, then suddenly glided downwards towards the bottom of a raging abyss, where it seemed utterly lost. At the expiration of an hour's struggling with the waves, it reached the spot where the admiral's vessel was anchored, and from the side of which two boats had already been dispatched towards their aid. Upon the quarter-deck of the flagship, sheltered by a canopy of velvet and ermine, which

was suspended by stout supports, Henrietta, the queen-dowager, and the young princess—with the admiral, the Duke of Norfolk, standing beside them—watched with alarm this slender bark, at one moment tossed to the heavens, and the next buried beneath the waves, and against whose dark sail the noble figures of the two French gentlemen stood forth in relief like two luminous apparitions. The crew, leaning against the bulwarks and clinging to the shrouds, cheered the courage of the two daring young men, the skill of the pilot, and the strength of the sailors. They were received at the side of the vessel by a shout of triumph. The Duke of Norfolk, a handsome young man, from twenty-six to twenty-eight years of age, advanced to meet them. De Guiche and Bragelonne lightly mounted the ladder on the starboard side, and, conducted by the Duke of Norfolk, who resumed his place near them, they approached to offer their homage to the princesses. Respect, and yet more, a certain, apprehension, for which he could not account, had hitherto restrained the Comte de Guiche from looking at Madame attentively, who, however, had observed him immediately, and had asked her mother, “Is not that Monsieur in the boat yonder?” Madame Henrietta, who knew Monsieur better than her daughter did, smiled at the mistake her vanity had led her into, and had answered, “No ; it is only M. de Guiche, his favorite.” The princess, at this reply, was constrained to check an instinctive tenderness of feeling which the courage displayed by the count had awakened. At the very moment the princess had put this question to her mother, De Guiche had, at last, summoned courage to raise his eyes towards her and could compare the original with the portrait he had so lately seen. No sooner had he remarked her pale face, her eyes so full of animation, her beautiful nut-brown hair, her expressive lips, and her every gesture, which,

while betokening royal descent, seemed to thank and to encourage him at one and the same time, than he was, for a moment, so overcome, that, had it not been for Raoul, on whose arm he leant, he would have fallen. His friend's amazed look, and the encouraging gesture of the queen, restored Guiche to his self-possession. In a few words he explained his mission, explained in what way he had become the envoy of his royal highness; and saluted, according to their rank and the reception they gave him, the admiral and several of the English noblemen who were grouped around the princesses.

Raoul was then presented, and was most graciously received; the share that the Comte de la Fère had had in the restoration of Charles II. was known to all; and, more than that, it was the comte who had been charged with the negotiation of the marriage, by means of which the grand-daughter of Henry IV. was now returning to France. Raoul spoke English perfectly, and constituted himself his friend's interpreter with the young English noblemen, who were indifferently acquainted with the French language. At this moment a young man came forward, of extremely handsome features, and whose dress and arms were remarkable for their extravagance of material. He approached the princesses, who were engaged in conversation with the Duke of Norfolk, and, in a voice which ill concealed his impatience, said, "It is time now to disembark, your Royal Highness." The younger of the princesses rose from her seat at this remark, and was about to take the hand which the young nobleman extended to her, with an eagerness which arose from a variety of motives, when the admiral intervened between them, observing: "A moment, if you please, my lord; it is not possible for ladies to disembark just now, the sea is too rough; it is probable the wind may abate before sun-

set, and the landing will not be effected, therefore, until this evening."

"Allow me to observe, my lord," said Buckingham, with an irritation of manner which he did not seek to disguise, "you detain these ladies, and you have no right to do so. One of them, unhappily, now belongs to France, and you perceive that France claims them by the voice of her ambassadors;" and at the same moment he indicated Raoul and Guiche, whom he saluted.

"I cannot suppose that these gentlemen intend to expose the lives of their Royal Highnesses," replied the admiral.

"These gentlemen," retorted Buckingham, "arrived here safely, notwithstanding the wind; allow me to believe that the danger will not be greater for their Royal Highnesses when the wind will be in their favor."

"These envoys have shown how great their courage is," said the admiral. "You may have observed that there was a great number of persons on shore who did *not* venture to accompany them. Moreover, the desire which they had to show their respect with the least possible delay to Madame and her illustrious mother, induced them to brave the sea, which is very tempestuous to-day, even for sailors. These gentlemen, however, whom I recommend as an example for my officers to follow, can hardly be so for these ladies."

Madame glanced at the Comte de Guiche, and perceived that his face was burning with confusion. This look had escaped Buckingham, who had eyes for nothing but Norfolk, of whom he was evidently very jealous; he seemed anxious to remove the princesses from the deck of a vessel where the admiral reigned supreme. "In that case," returned Buckingham. "I appeal to Madame herself."

"And I, my lord," retorted the admiral, "I appeal to

my own conscience, and to my own sense of responsibility. I have undertaken to convey Madame safe and sound to France, and I shall keep my promise."

"But, sir——" continued Buckingham.

"My lord, permit me to remind you that I command here."

"Are you aware what you are saying, my lord?" replied Buckingham, haughtily.

"Perfectly so; I therefore repeat it: I alone command here, all yield obedience to me; the sea and the winds, the ships and men too." This remark was made in a dignified and authoritative manner. Raoul observed its effect upon Buckingham, who trembled with anger from head to foot, and leaned against one of the poles of the tent to prevent himself falling; his eyes became suffused with blood, and the hand which he did not need for his support wandered towards the hilt of his sword.

"My lord," said the queen, permit me to observe that I agree in every particular with the Duke of Norfolk; if the heavens, instead of being clouded as they are at the present moment, were perfectly serene and propitious, we can still afford to bestow a few hours upon the officer who has conducted us so successfully, and with such extreme attention, to the French coast, where he is to take leave of us."

Buckingham, instead of replying, seemed to seek counsel from the expression of Madame's face. She, however half-concealed beneath the thick curtains of the velvet and gold which sheltered her, had not listened to the discussion, having been occupied in watching the Comte de Guiche, who was conversing with Raoul. This was a fresh misfortune for Buckingham, who fancied he perceived in Madame Henrietta's look a deeper feeling than that of curiosity. He withdrew, almost tottering in his gait, and nearly stumbled against the mainmast of the ship.

"The duke has not acquired a steady footing yet," said the queen-mother, in French, "and that may possibly be his reason for wishing to find himself on firm land again."

The young man overheard this remark, turned suddenly pale, and, letting his hands fall in great discouragement by his side, drew aside, mingling in one sigh his old affection and his new hatreds. The admiral, however, without taking any further notice of the duke's ill-humor, led the princesses into the quarter-deck cabin, where dinner had been served with a magnificence worthy in every respect of his guests. The admiral seated himself at the right hand of the princess, and placed the Comte de Guiche on her left. This was the place Buckingham usually occupied; and when he entered the cabin, how profound was his unhappiness to see himself banished by etiquette from the presence of his sovereign, to a position inferior to that which, by rank, he was entitled to. De Guiche, on the other hand, paler still perhaps from happiness, than his rival was from anger, seated himself tremblingly next the princess, whose silken robe, as it lightly touched him, caused a tremor of mingled regret and happiness to pass through his whole frame. The repast finished, Buckingham darted forward to hand Madame Henrietta from the table; but this time it was De Guiche's turn to give the duke a lesson. "Have the goodness, my lord, from this moment," said he, "not to interpose between her royal highness and myself. From this moment, indeed, her royal highness belongs to France, and when she deigns to honor me by touching my hand, it is the hand of Monsieur, the brother of the king of France, she touches."

And saying this, he presented his hand to Madame Henrietta with such marked deference, and at the same time, with a nobleness of mien so intrepid, that a murmur of admiration rose from the English, whilst a groan of despair

escaped from Buckingham's lips. Raoul, who loved, comprehended it all. He fixed upon his friend one of those profound looks which a bosom friend or mother can alone extend, either as protector or guardian, over the one who is about to stray from the right path. Towards two o'clock in the afternoon the sun shone forth anew, the wind subsided, the sea became smooth as a crystal mirror, and the fog, which had shrouded the coast, disappeared like a veil withdrawn from before it. The smiling hills of France appeared in full view, with their numerous white houses rendered more conspicuous by the bright green of the trees or the clear blue sky.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TENTS.

THE admiral, as we have seen, was determined to pay no further attention to Buckingham's threatening glances and fits of passion. In fact, from the moment they quitted England, he had gradually accustomed himself to his behavior. De Guiche had not yet in any way remarked the animosity which appeared to influence that young nobleman against him, but he felt, instinctively, that there could be no sympathy between himself and the favorite of Charles II. The queen-mother, with greater experience and calmer judgment, perceived the exact position of affairs, and, as she discerned its danger, was prepared to meet it, whenever the proper moment should arrive. Quiet had been everywhere restored, except in Buckingham's heart; he, in his impatience, addressed himself to the princess, in a low tone of voice: "For Heaven's sake, madame, I implore you to hasten your disembarkation.

Do you not perceive how that insolent Duke of Norfolk is killing me with his attentions and devotions to you?"

Henrietta heard this remark; she smiled, and without turning her head towards him, but giving only to the tone of her voice that inflection of gentle reproach, and languid impertinence, which women and princesses so well know how to assume, she murmured, "I have already hinted, my lord, that you must have taken leave of your senses."

Not a single detail escaped Raoul's attention; he heard both Buckingham's entreaty and the princess's reply; he remarked Buckingham retire, heard his deep sigh, and saw him pass his hand across his face. He understood everything, and trembled as he reflected on the position of affairs, and the state of the minds of those about him. At last the admiral, with studied delay, gave the last orders for the departure of the boats. Buckingham heard the directions given with such an exhibition of delight that a stranger would really imagine the young man's reason was affected. As the Duke of Norfolk gave his commands, a large boat or barge, decked with flags, and capable of holding about twenty rowers and fifteen passengers, was slowly lowered from the side of the admiral's vessel. The barge was carpeted with velvet and decorated with coverings embroidered with the arms of England, and with garlands of flowers; for, at that time, ornamentation was by no means forgotten in these political pageants. No sooner was this really royal boat afloat, and the rowers with oars uplifted, awaiting, like soldiers presenting arms, the embarkation of the princess, than Buckingham ran forward to the ladder in order to take his place. His progress was, however, arrested by the queen. "My lord," she said, "it is hardly becoming that you should allow my daughter and myself to land without having previously ascertained that our apartments are properly

prepared. I beg your lordship to be good enough to precede us ashore, and to give directions that everything be in proper order on our arrival."

This was a fresh disappointment for the duke, and, still more so, since it was so unexpected. He hesitated, colored violently, but could not reply. He had thought he might be able to keep near Madame during the passage to the shore, and, by this means, to enjoy to the very last moment the brief period fortune still reserved for him. The order, however, was explicit; and the admiral, who heard it given, immediately called out, "Launch the ship's gig." His directions were executed with that celerity which distinguishes every maneuver on board a man-of-war.

Buckingham, in utter hopelessness, cast a look of despair at the princess, of supplication towards the queen, and directed a glance full of anger towards the admiral. The princess pretended not to notice him, while the queen turned aside her head, and the admiral laughed outright, at the sound of which Buckingham seemed ready to spring upon him. The queen-mother rose, and with a tone of authority, said, "Pray set off, sir."

The young duke hesitated, looked around him, and with a last effort, half-choked by contending emotions, said, "And you, gentlemen, M. de Guiche and M. de Bragelonne, do not you accompany me?"

De Guiche bowed and said, "Both M. de Bragelonne and myself await her majesty's orders; whatever the commands she imposes on us, we shall obey them." Saying this, he looked towards the princess, who cast down her eyes.

"Your grace will remember," said the queen, "that M. de Guiche is here to represent Monsieur; it is he who will do the honors of France, as you have done those of England; his presence cannot be dispensed with; be-

sides, we owe him this slight favor for the courage he displayed in venturing to seek us in such a terrible stress of weather."

Buckingham opened his lips, as if he were about to speak, but, whether thoughts or expressions failed him, not a syllable escaped them, and turning away, as though out of his mind, he leapt from the vessel into the boat. The sailors were just in time to catch hold of him to steady themselves; for his weight and the rebound had almost upset the boat.

"His grace cannot be in his senses," said the admiral aloud to Raoul.

"I am uneasy on the Duke's account," replied Bragelonne.

While the boat was advancing towards the shore, the duke kept his eyes immovably fixed upon the admiral's ship, like a miser torn away from his coffers, or a mother separated from her child, about to be led away to death. No one, however, acknowledged his signals, his frowns, or his pitiful gestures. In very anguish of mind, he sank down in the boat, burying his hands in his hair, whilst the boat, impelled by the exertions of the merry sailors, flew over the waves. On his arrival he was in such a state of apathy, that, had he not been received at the harbor by the messenger whom he had directed to precede him, he would hardly have had strength to ask his way. Having once, however, reached the house which had been set apart for him, he shut himself up, like Achilles in his tent. The barge bearing the princesses quitted the admiral's vessel at the very moment Buckingham landed. It was followed by another boat filled with officers, courtiers, and zealous friends. Great numbers of the inhabitants of Havre, having embarked in fishing-cobles, and boats of every description, set off to meet the royal barge. The cannon from the forts fired salutes, which

were returned by the flag-ship and the two other vessels, and the flashes from the open mouths of the cannon floated in white fumes over the waves, and disappeared in the clear blue sky.

The princess landed at the decorated quay. Bands of gay music greeted her arrival, and accompanied her every step she took. During the time she was passing through the center of the town, and treading beneath her delicate feet the richest carpets and the gayest flowers, which had been strewn upon the ground, De Guiche and Raoul, escaping from their English friends, hurried through the town and hastened rapidly towards the place intended for the residence of Madame.

"Let us hurry forward," said Raoul to De Guiche, "for, if I read Buckingham's character aright, he will create some disturbance, when he learns the result of our deliberations of yesterday."

"Never fear," said De Guiche, "De Wardes is there, who is determination itself, while Manicamp is the very personification of artless gentleness."

De Guiche was not, however, the less diligent on that account, and five minutes afterwards they were within sight of the Hôtel de Ville. The first thing which struck them was the number of people assembled in the square. "Excellent," said De Guiche; "our apartments, I see, are prepared."

In fact, in front of the Hôtel de Ville, upon the wide open space before it, eight tents had been raised, surmounted by the flags of France and England united. The hotel was surrounded by tents, as by a girdle of variegated colors; ten pages and a dozen mounted troopers, who had been given to the ambassadors, for an escort, mounted guard before the tents. It had a singularly curious effect, almost fairy-like in its appearance. These tents had been constructed during

the night-time. Fitted up, within and without, with the richest materials that De Guiche had been able to procure in Havre, they completely encircled the Hôtel de Ville. The only passage which led to the steps of the hotel, and which was not inclosed by the silken barricade, was guarded by two tents, resembling two pavilions, the doorways of both of which opened towards the entrance. These two tents were destined for De Guiche and Raoul ; in whose absence they were intended to be occupied, that of De Guiche by De Wardes, and that of Raoul by Manicamp. Surrounding these two tents, and the six others, a hundred officers, gentlemen, and pages, dazzling in their display of silk and gold, thronged like bees buzzing about a hive. Every one of them, their swords by their sides, was ready to obey the slightest sign either of De Guiche or Bragelonne, the leaders of the embassy.

At the very moment the two young men appeared at the end of one of the streets leading to the square, they perceived, crossing the square at full gallop, a young man on horseback, whose costume was of surprising richness. He pushed hastily through the crowd of curious lookers-on, and, at the sight of these unexpected erections, uttered a cry of anger and dismay. It was Buckingham, who had awakened from his stupor, in order to adorn himself with a costume perfectly dazzling from its beauty, and to await the arrival of the princess and the queen-mother at the Hôtel de Ville. At the entrance to the tents, the soldiers barred his passage, and his further progress was arrested. Buckingham, hopelessly infuriated, raised his whip ; but his arm was seized by a couple of officers. Of the two guardians of the tent, only one was there. De Wardes was in the interior of the Hôtel de Ville, engaged in attending to the execution of some orders given by De Guiche. At the noise made by Buckingham, Manicamp, who was indolently reclining upon the cushions at the

doorway of one of the tents, rose with his usual indifference, and, perceiving that the disturbance continued, made his appearance from underneath the curtains. "What is the matter?" he said, in a gentle tone of voice, "and who is it making this disturbance?"

It so happened, that, at the moment he began to speak, silence had just been restored, and, although his voice was very soft and gentle in its tone, every one heard his question. Buckingham turned round, and looked at the tall thin figure, and the listless expression of countenance of his questioner. Probably the personal appearance of Manicamp, who was dressed very plainly, did not inspire him with much respect, for he replied disdainfully, "Who may you be, monsieur?"

Manicamp, leaning on the arm of a gigantic trooper, as firm as the pillar of a cathedral, replied in his usual tranquil tone of voice,—“And *you*, monsieur?”

“I, monsieur, am the Duke of Buckingham; I have hired all the houses which surround the Hôtel de Ville, where I have business to transact; and as these houses are let, they belong to me, and, as I hired them in order to preserve the right of free access to the Hôtel de Ville, you are not justified in preventing me passing to it.”

“But who prevents you passing, monsieur?” inquired Manicamp.

“Your sentinels.”

“Because you wish to pass on horseback, and orders have been given to let only persons on foot pass.”

“No one has any right to give orders here, except myself,” said Buckingham.

“On what grounds?” inquired Manicamp, with his soft tone. “Will you do me the favor to explain this enigma to me?”

“Because, as I have already told you, I have hired all the houses looking on the square.”

"We are very well aware of that, since nothing but the square itself has been left for us."

"You are mistaken, monsieur; the square belongs to me, as well as the houses in it."

"Forgive me, monsieur, but you are mistaken there. In *our* country, we say, the highway belongs to the king, therefore this square is his majesty's; and, consequently, as we are the king's ambassadors, the square belongs to us."

"I have already asked you who you are, monsieur," exclaimed Buckingham, exasperated at the coolness of his interlocutor.

"My name is Manicamp," replied the young man, in a voice, whose tones were as harmonious and sweet as the notes of an *Æolian* harp.

Buckingham shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and said, "When I hired these houses which surround the *Hôtel de Ville*, the square was unoccupied: these barracks obstruct my sight; I hereby order them to be removed."

A hoarse and angry murmur ran through the crowd of listeners at these words. De Guiche arrived at this moment; he pushed through the crowd which separated him from Buckingham, and, followed by Raoul, arrived on the scene of action from one side, just as De Wardes came up from the other. "Pardon me, my lord; but if you have any complaint to make, have the goodness to address it to me, inasmuch as it was I who supplied the plans for the construction of these tents."

"Moreover, I would beg you to observe, monsieur, that the term 'barrack' is a highly objectionable one!" added Manicamp, graciously.

"You were saying, monsieur—" continued De Guiche.

"I was saying, monsieur le comte," resumed Buckingham, in a tone of anger more marked than ever, although

in some measure moderated by the presence of an equal, "I was saying, that it is impossible these tents can remain where they are."

"*Impossible!*" exclaimed De Guiche, "and why?"

"Because I object to them."

A movement of impatience escaped De Guiche, but a warning glance from Raoul restrained him.

"You should the less object to them, monsieur, on account of the abuse of priority you have permitted yourself to exercise."

"*Abuse!*"

"Most assuredly. You commission a messenger, who hires in your name the whole of the town of Havre, without considering the members of the French court, who would be sure to arrive here to meet Madame. Your Grace will admit that this is hardly friendly conduct in the representative of a friendly nation."

"The right of possession belongs to him who is first on the ground."

"Not in France, monsieur."

"Why not in France?"

"Because France is a country where politeness is observed."

"Which means!" exclaimed Buckingham, in so violent a manner that those who were present drew back, expecting an immediate collision.

"Which means, monsieur," replied De Guiche, now rather pale, "that I caused these tents to be raised as habitations for myself and my friends, as a shelter for the ambassadors of France, as the only place of refuge which your exactions have left us in the town; and that I, and those who are with me, shall remain in them, at least, until an authority more powerful, and more supreme, than your own shall dismiss me from them."

"In other words, until we are ejected, as the lawyers say," observed Manicamp, blandly.

"I know an authority, monsieur, which I trust is such as you will respect," said Buckingham, placing his hand on his sword.

At this moment, and as the goddess of Discord, inflaming all minds, was about to direct their swords against each other, Raoul gently placed his hand on Buckingham's shoulder. "One word, my lord," he said.

"My right, my right, first of all," exclaimed the fiery young man.

"It is precisely upon that point I wish to have the honor of addressing a word to you."

"Very well, monsieur, but let your remarks be brief."

"One question is all I ask; you can hardly expect me to be briefer."

"Speak, monsieur, I am listening."

"Are you, or is the Duke of Orleans, going to marry the grand-daughter of Henry IV.?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Buckingham, retreating a few steps, bewildered.

"Have the goodness to answer me," persisted Raoul tranquilly.

"Do you mean to ridicule me, monsieur?" inquired Buckingham.

"Your question is a sufficient answer for me. You admit, then, that it is not you who are going to marry the princess?"

"You know it perfectly well, monsieur, I should imagine."

"I beg your pardon, but your conduct has been such as to leave it not altogether certain."

"Proceed, monsieur, what do you mean to convey?"

Raoul approached the duke. "Are you aware, my lord," he said, lowering his voice, "that your extrava-

gances very much resemble the excesses of jealousy? These jealous fits, with respect to any woman, are not becoming in one who is neither her lover nor her husband; and I am sure you will admit that my remark applies with still greater force, when the lady in question is a princess of the blood royal!"

"Monsieur," exclaimed Buckingham, "do you mean to insult Madame Henrietta?"

"Be careful, my lord," replied Bragelonne, coldly, "for it is you who insult her. A little while since, when on board the admiral's ship, you wearied the queen, and exhausted the admiral's patience. I was observing, my lord; and, at first, I concluded you were not in possession of your senses, but I have since surmised the real significance of your madness."

"Monsieur!" exclaimed Buckingham.

"One moment more, for I have yet another word to add. I trust I am the only one of my companions who have guessed it."

"Are you aware, monsieur," said Buckingham, trembling with mingled feelings of anger and uneasiness, "are you aware that you are holding language towards me which requires to be checked?"

"Weigh your words well, my lord," said Raoul, haughtily; "my nature is not such that its vivacities need checking; whilst you, on the contrary, are descended from a race whose passions are suspected by all true Frenchmen; I repeat, therefore, for the second time, be careful!"

"Careful of what, may I ask? Do you presume to threaten me?"

"I am the son of the Comte de la Fère, my lord, and I never threaten, because I strike first. Therefore, understand me well, the threat that I hold out to you is this—"

Buckingham clenched his hands, but Raoul continued, as though he had not observed the gesture. "At the very

first word, beyond the respect and deference due to her royal highness, which you permit yourself to use towards her.—Be patient, my lord, for I am perfectly so.”

“You?”

“Undoubtedly. So long as madame remained on English territory, I held my peace; but from the very moment she stepped on French ground, and now that we have received her in the name of the prince, I warn you, that at the first mark of disrespect which you, in your insane attachment, exhibit towards the royal house of France, I shall have one of two courses to follow;—either I declare, in the presence of every one, the madness with which you are now affected, and I get you ignominiously ordered back to England; or if you prefer it, I will run my dagger through your throat in the presence of all here. This second alternative seems to me the least disagreeable, and I think I shall hold to it.”

Buckingham had become paler than the lace collar around his neck. “M. de Bragelonne,” he said, “is it, indeed, a gentleman who is speaking to me?”

“Yes; only the gentleman is speaking to a madman. Get cured, my lord, and he will hold quite another language to you.”

“But, M. de Bragelonne,” murmured the duke, in a voice, half-choked, and putting his hand to his neck,—“Do you not see I am choking?”

“If your death were to take place at this moment, my lord,” replied Raoul, with unruffled composure, “I should, indeed, regard it as a great happiness, for this circumstance would prevent all kinds of evil remarks; not alone about yourself, but also about those illustrious persons whom your devotion is compromising in so absurd a manner.”

“You are right, you are right,” said the young man, almost beside himself. “Yes, yes: better to die, than to

suffer as I do at this moment." And he grasped a beautiful dagger, the handle of which was inlaid with precious stones; and which he half drew from his breast.

Raoul thrust his hand aside. "Be careful what you do," he said; "if you do not kill yourself, you commit a ridiculous action; and if you were to kill yourself, you sprinkle blood upon the nuptial robe of the princess of England."

Buckingham remained a minute gasping for breath; during this interval, his lips quivered, his fingers worked convulsively, and his eyes wandered as though in delirium. Then suddenly, he said, "M. de Bragelonne, I know nowhere a nobler mind than yours; you are, indeed, a worthy son of the most perfect gentleman that ever lived. Keep your tents." And he threw his arms round Raoul's neck. All who were present, astounded at this conduct, which was the very reverse of what was expected, considering the violence of the one adversary, and the determination of the other, began immediately to clap their hands, and a thousand cheers and joyful shouts arose from all sides. De Guiche, in his turn, embraced Buckingham somewhat against his inclination; but, at all events, he did embrace him. This was the signal for French and English to do the same; and they who, until that moment, had looked at each other with restless uncertainty, fraternized on the spot. In the meantime, the procession of the princess arrived, and had it not been for Bragelonne, two armies would have been engaged together in conflict, and blood have been shed upon the flowers with which the ground was covered. At the appearance, however, of the banners borne at the head of the procession, complete order was restored.

CHAPTER XXX.

NIGHT.

CONCORD returned to its place amidst the tents. English and French rivaled each other in their devotion and courteous attention to the illustrious travelers. The English forwarded to the French baskets of flowers, of which they had made a plentiful provision to greet the arrival of the young princess; the French in return invited the English to a supper, which was to be given the next day. Congratulations were poured in upon the princess everywhere during her journey. From the respect paid her on all sides, she seemed like a queen; and from the adoration with which she was treated by two or three, she appeared an object of worship. The queen-mother gave the French the most affectionate reception. France was her native country, and she had suffered too much unhappiness in England for England to have made her forget France. She taught her daughter, then, by her own affection for it, that love for a country where they had both been hospitably received, and where a brilliant future opened before them. After the public entry was over, and the spectators in the streets had partially dispersed, and the sound of the music and cheering of the crowd could be heard only in the distance; when the night had closed in, wrapping, with its star-covered mantle, the sea, the harbor, the town, and surrounding country, De Guiche, still excited by the great events of the day, returned to his tent, and seated himself upon one of the stools with so profound an expression of distress, that Bragelonne kept

his eyes fixed on him until he heard him sigh, and then he approached him. The count had thrown himself back on his seat, leaning his shoulders against the partition of the tent, and remained thus, his face buried in his hands with heaving chest and restless limbs.

"You are suffering?" asked Raoul.

"Cruelly."

"Bodily, I suppose?"

"Yes; bodily."

"This has indeed been a harassing day," continued the young man, his eyes fixed upon his friend.

"Yes; a night's rest will probably restore me."

"Shall I leave you?"

"No; I wish to talk to you."

"You shall not speak to me, Guiche, until you have first answered my questions."

"Proceed then."

"You will be frank with me?"

"I always am."

"Can you imagine why Buckingham has been so violent?"

"I suspect."

"Because he is in love with Madame, is it not?"

"One could almost swear to it, to observe him."

"You are mistaken; there is nothing of the kind."

"It is you who are mistaken, Raoul; I have read his distress in his eyes, in his every gesture and action the whole day."

"You are a poet, my dear count, and find subject for your muse everywhere."

"I can perceive love clearly enough."

"Where it does not exist?"

"Nay, where it does exist."

"Do you not think you are deceiving yourself, Guiche?"

"I am convinced of what I say," said the count.

"Now, inform me, count," said Raoul, fixing a penetrating look upon him, "what has happened to render you so clear-sighted?"

Guiche hesitated for a moment, and then answered, "Self-love, I suppose."

"Self-love is a pedantic word, Guiche."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that, generally, you are less out of spirits than seems to be the case this evening."

"I am fatigued."

"Listen to me, Guiche; we have been campaigners together; we have been on horseback for eighteen hours at a time, and our horses dying from exhaustion, or hunger, have fallen beneath us, and yet we have laughed at our mishaps. Believe me, it is not fatigue that saddens you to-night."

"It is annoyance, then."

"What annoyance?"

"That of this evening."

"The mad conduct of the Duke of Buckingham, do you mean?"

"Of course; is it not vexatious for us, the representatives of our sovereign master, to witness the devotion of an Englishman to our future mistress, the second lady in point of rank in the kingdom?"

"Yes, you are right; but I do not think any danger is to be apprehended from Buckingham."

"No; still he is intrusive. Did he not, on his arrival here, almost succeed in creating a disturbance between the English and ourselves; and, had it not been for you, for your admirable prudence, for your singular decision of character, swords would have been drawn in the very streets of the town."

"You observe, however, that he has changed his tactics."

"Yes, certainly; but this is the very thing that amazes me so much. You spoke to him in a low tone of voice, what did you say to him? You think he loves her; you admit that such a passion does not give way readily. He does not love her, then!" De Guiche pronounced the latter words with so marked an expression that Raoul raised his head. The noble character of the young man's countenance expressed a displeasure which could easily be read.

"What I said to him, count," replied Raoul, "I will repeat to you. Listen to me. I said, 'You are regarding with wistful feelings, and most injurious desire, the sister of your prince,—her to whom you are not affianced, who is not, who can never be anything to you; you are outraging those who, like ourselves, have come to seek a young lady to escort her to her husband.'"

"You spoke to him in that manner?" asked Guiche, coloring.

"In those very terms; I even added more. 'How would you regard us,' I said, 'if you were to perceive among us a man mad enough, disloyal enough, to entertain other than sentiments of the most perfect respect for a princess who is the destined wife of our master?'"

These words were so applicable to De Guiche that he turned pale, and, overcome by a sudden agitation, was barely able to stretch out one hand mechanically towards Raoul, as he covered his eyes and face with the other.

"But," continued Raoul, not interrupted by this movement of his friend, "Heaven be praised, the French, who are pronounced to be thoughtless and indiscreet, reckless even, are capable of bringing a calm and sound judgment to bear on matters of such high importance. I added even more, for I said, 'Learn, my lord, that we gentlemen of France devote ourselves to our sovereigns by sacrificing for them our affections, as well as our for-

tunes and our lives: and whenever it may chance to happen that the tempter suggests one of those vile thoughts that set the heart on fire, we extinguish the flame, even if it has to be done by shedding our blood for the purpose. Thus it is that the honor of three is saved: our country's, our master's, and our own. It is thus that we act, your grace; it is thus that every man of honor ought to act.' In this manner, my dear Guiche," continued Raoul, "I addressed the Duke of Buckingham; and he admitted I was right and resigned himself unresistingly to my arguments."

De Guiche, who had hitherto sat leaning forward while Raoul was speaking, drew himself up, his eyes glancing proudly; he seized Raoul's hand, his face, which had been as cold as ice, seemed on fire. "And you spoke magnificently," he said, in a half-choked voice; "you are indeed a friend, Raoul. But now, I entreat you, leave me to myself."

"Do you wish it!"

"Yes; I need repose. Many things have agitated me to-day, both in mind and body; when you return to-morrow I shall no longer be the same man."

"I leave you, then," said Raoul, as he withdrew. The count advanced a step towards his friend, and pressed him warmly in his arms. But in this friendly pressure Raoul could detect the nervous agitation of a great internal conflict.

The night was clear, starlit, and splendid; the tempest had passed away, and the sweet influences of the evening had restored life, peace, and security everywhere. A few fleecy clouds were floating in the heavens, and indicated from their appearance a continuance of beautiful weather, tempered by a gentle breeze from the east. Upon the large square in front of the hotel, the shadows of the tents, intersected by the golden moonbeams, formed as it

were a huge mosaic of jet and yellow flagstones. Soon, however, the entire town was wrapped in slumber; a feeble light still glimmered in Madame's apartment, which looked out upon the square, and the soft rays from the expiring lamp seemed to be the image of the calm sleep of a young girl, hardly yet sensible of life's anxieties, and in whom the flame of existence sinks placidly as sleep steals over the body. Bragelonne quitted the tent with the slow and measured step of a man curious to observe, but anxious not to be seen. Sheltered behind the thick curtains of his own tent, embracing with a glance the whole square, he noticed that, after a few moments' pause, the curtains of De Guiche's tent were agitated, and then drawn partially aside. Behind them he could perceive the shadow of De Guiche, his eyes glittering in the obscurity, fastened ardently upon the princess's sitting apartment, which was partially lighted by the lamp in the inner room. The soft light which illumined the windows was the count's star. The fervent aspirations of his nature could be read in his eyes. Raoul, concealed in the shadow, divined the many passionate thoughts that established, between the tent of the young ambassador and the balcony of the princess, a mysterious and magical bond of sympathy—a bond created by thoughts imprinted with so much strength and persistence of will, that they must have caused happy and loving dreams to alight upon the perfumed couch, which the count, with the eyes of his soul, devoured so eagerly. But De Guiche and Raoul were not the only watchers. The window of one of the houses looking on the square was opened too, the casement of the house where Buckingham resided. By the aid of the rays of light which issued from this latter, the profile of the duke could be distinctly seen, as he indolently reclined upon the carved balcony with its velvet hangings; he also was breathing in the direction of the

princess's apartment his prayers and the wild visions of his love.

Raoul could not resist smiling, as, thinking of Madame, he said to himself, "Hers is, indeed, a heart well besieged;" and then added, compassionately, as he thought of Monsieur, "and he is a husband well threatened too; it is a good thing for him that he is a prince of such high rank, that he has an army to safeguard for him that which is his own." Bragelonne watched for some time the conduct of the two lovers, listened to the loud and uncivil slumbers of Manicamp, who snored as imperiously as though he was wearing his blue and gold, instead of his violet suit.

Then he turned towards the night breeze which bore towards him, he seemed to think, the distant song of the nightingale; and, after having laid in a due provision of melancholy, another nocturnal malady, he retired to rest thinking, with regard to his own love affair, that perhaps four or even a larger number of eyes, quite as ardent as those of De Guiche and Buckingham, were coveting his own idol in the château at Blois. "And Mademoiselle de Montalais is by no means a very conscientious garrison," said he to himself, sighing aloud.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FROM HAVRE TO PARIS.

THE next day the *fêtes* took place, accompanied by all the pomp and animation that the resources of the town and the cheerful disposition of men's minds could supply. During the last few hours spent in Havre, every preparation for the departure had been made. After Madame

had taken leave of the English fleet, and, once again, had saluted the country in saluting its flags, she entered her carriage, surrounded by a brilliant escort. De Guiche had hoped that the Duke of Buckingham would accompany the admiral to England; but Buckingham succeeded in demonstrating to the queen that there would be great impropriety in allowing Madame to proceed to Paris, almost unprotected. As soon as it had been settled that Buckingham was to accompany Madame, the young duke selected a corps of gentlemen and officers to form part of his own suite, so that it was almost an army that now set out towards Paris, scattering gold, and exciting the liveliest demonstrations as they passed through the different towns and villages on the route. The weather was very fine. France is a beautiful country, especially along the route by which the procession passed. Spring cast its flowers and its perfumed foliage on their path. Normandy, with its vast variety of vegetation, its blue skies and silver rivers, displayed itself in all the loveliness of a paradise to the new sister of the king. *Fêtes* and brilliant displays received them everywhere along the line of march. De Guiche and Buckingham forgot everything; De Guiche in his anxiety to prevent any fresh attempts on the part of the duke, and Buckingham, in his desire to awaken in the heart of the princess a softer remembrance of the country to which the recollection of many happy days belonged. But, alas! the poor duke could perceive that the image of that country so cherished by himself became, from day to day, more and more effaced in Madame's mind, in exact proportion as her affection for France became more deeply engraved on her heart. In fact, it was not difficult to perceive that his most devoted attention awakened no acknowledgment, and that the grace with which he rode one of his most fiery horses was thrown away, for it was only casually and by the merest

accident that the princess's eyes were turned towards him. In vain did he try, in order to fix upon himself one of those looks, which were thrown carelessly around, or bestowed elsewhere, to produce in the animal he rode its greatest display of strength, speed, temper, and address; in vain did he, by exciting his horse almost to madness, spur him, at the risk of dashing himself in pieces against the trees, or of rolling in the ditches, over the gates and barriers which they passed, or down the steep declivities of the hills. Madame, whose attention had been aroused by the noise, turned her head for a moment to observe the cause of it, and then, slightly smiling, again entered into conversation with her faithful guardians, Raoul and De Guiche, who were quietly riding at her carriage doors. Buckingham felt himself a prey to all the tortures of jealousy; an unknown, unheard of anguish glided through his veins, and laid siege to his heart; and then, as if to show that he knew the folly of his conduct, and that he wished to correct, by the humblest submission, his flights of absurdity, he mastered his horse, and compelled him, reeking with sweat and flecked with foam, to champ his bit close beside the carriage, amidst the crowd of courtiers. Occasionally he obtained a word from Madame as a recompense, and yet her speech seemed almost a reproach.

"That is well, my lord," she said, "now you are reasonable."

Or from Raoul, "Your grace is killing your horse."

Buckingham listened patiently to Raoul's remarks, for he instinctively felt, without having had any proof that such was the case, that Raoul checked the display of De Guiche's feelings, and that, had it not been for Raoul, some mad act or proceeding, either of the count, or of Buckingham himself, would have brought about an open rupture, or a disturbance—perhaps even exile itself.

From the moment of that excited conversation the two young men had held in front of the tents at Havre, when Raoul made the duke perceive the impropriety of his conduct, Buckingham felt himself attracted towards Raoul almost in spite of himself. He often entered into conversation with him, and it was nearly always to talk to him either of his father or of D'Artagnan, their mutual friend, in whose praise Buckingham was nearly as enthusiastic as Raoul. Raoul endeavored, as much as possible, to make the conversation turn upon this subject in De Wardes' presence, who had, during the whole journey, been exceedingly annoyed at the superior position taken by Bragelonne, and especially by his influence over De Guiche. De Wardes had that keen and merciless penetration most evil natures possess; he had immediately remarked De Guiche's melancholy, and divined the nature of his regard for the princess. Instead, however, of treating the subject with the same reserve which Raoul practiced; instead of regarding with that respect, which was their due, the obligations and duties of society, De Wardes resolutely attacked in the count the ever-sounding chord of juvenile audacity and pride. It happened one evening, during a halt at Nantes, that while De Guiche and De Wardes were leaning against a barrier, engaged in conversation, Buckingham and Raoul were also talking together as they walked up and down. Manicamp was engaged in devoted attendance on the princess, who already treated him without reserve, on account of his versatile fancy, his frank courtesy of manner, and conciliatory disposition.

"Confess," said De Wardes, "that you are really ill, and that your pedagogue of a friend has not succeeded in curing you."

"I do not understand you," said the count.

"And yet it is easy enough; you are dying of love."

"You are mad, De Wardes."

Madness it would be, I admit, if Madame were really indifferent to your martyrdom; but she takes so much notice of it, observes it to such an extent, that she compromises herself, and I tremble lest, on our arrival at Paris, M. de Bragelonne may not denounce both of you."

"For shame, De Wardes, again attacking De Bragelonne."

"Come, come, a truce to child's play," replied the count's evil genius, in an undertone; "you know as well as I do what I mean. Besides, you must have observed how the princess's glance softens as she looks at you;—you can tell, by the very inflection of her voice, what pleasure she takes in listening to you, and can feel how thoroughly she appreciates the verses you recite to her. You cannot deny, too, that every morning she tells you how indifferently she slept the previous night."

"True, De Wardes, quite true: but what good is there in your telling me all that?"

"Is it not important to know the exact position of affairs?"

"No, no; not when I am a witness of things that are enough to drive one mad."

"Stay, stay," said De Wardes; look, she calls you,—do you understand? Profit by the occasion, while your pedagogue is absent."

De Guiche could not resist; an invincible attraction drew him towards the princess. De Wardes smiled as he saw him withdraw.

"You are mistaken, monsieur," said Raoul, suddenly stepping across the barrier against which the previous moment the two friends had been leaning. "The pedagogue is here, and has overheard you."

De Wardes, at the sound of Raoul's voice, which he

recognized without having occasion to look at him, half drew his sword.

"Put up your sword," said Raoul; "you know perfectly well that, until our journey is at an end, every demonstration of that nature is useless. Why do you distill into the heart of the man you term your friend all the bitterness that infects your own? As regards myself, you wish to arouse a feeling of deep dislike against a man of honor—my father's friend, and my own; and as for the count you wish him to love one who is destined for your master. Really, monsieur, I should regard you as a coward, and a traitor too, if I did not, with greater justice, regard you as a madman."

"Monsieur," exclaimed De Wardes, exasperated, "I was deceived, I find, in terming you a pedagogue. The tone you assume, and the style which is peculiarly your own, is that of a Jesuit, and not of a gentleman. Discontinue, I beg, whenever I am present, this style I complain of, and the tone also. I hate M. d'Artagnan because he was guilty of a cowardly act towards my father."

"You lie, monsieur," said Raoul, coolly.

"You give me the lie, monsieur?" exclaimed De Wardes.

"Why not, if what you assert is untrue?"

"You give me the lie and will not draw your sword?"

"I have resolved, monsieur, not to kill you until Madame shall have been delivered safely into her husband's hands."

"Kill me! Believe me, monsieur, your schoolmaster's rod does not kill so easily."

"No," replied Raoul, sternly, "but M. d'Artagnan's sword kills; and, not only do I possess his sword, but he has himself taught me how to use it; and with that sword, when a befitting time arrives, I will avenge his name—a name you have dishonored."

"Take care, monsieur," exclaimed De Wardes ; "if you do not immediately give me satisfaction, I will avail myself of every means to revenge myself."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Buckingham, suddenly, appearing upon the scene of action, "that is a threat which savors of assassination, and therefore, ill becomes a gentleman."

"What did you say, my lord?" said De Wardes, turning round towards him.

"I said, monsieur, that the words you have just spoken are displeasing to my English ears."

"Very well, monsieur, if what you say is true," exclaimed De Wardes, thoroughly incensed, "I at least find in you one who will not escape me. Understand my words as you like."

"I take them in the manner they cannot but be understood," replied Buckingham, with that haughty tone which characterized him, and which, even in ordinary conversation, gave a tone of defiance to everything he said; "M. de Bragelonne is my friend, you insult M. de Bragelonne, and you shall give me satisfaction for that insult."

De Wardes cast a look upon De Bragelonne, who, faithful to the character he had assumed, remained calm and unmoved, even after the duke's defiance.

"It would seem that I did not insult M. de Bragelonne, since M. de Bragelonne, who carries a sword by his side, does not consider himself insulted."

"At all events you insult some one."

"Yes, I insulted M. d'Artagnan," resumed De Wardes, who had observed that this was the only means of stinging Raoul, so as to awaken his anger.

"That, then," said Buckingham, "is another matter."

"Precisely so," said De Wardes; "it is the province of M. d'Artagnan's friends to defend him."

"I am entirely of your opinion," replied the duke, who

had regained all his indifference of manner: "if M. de Bragelonne were offended, I could not reasonably be expected to espouse his quarrel, since he is himself here; but when you say that it is a quarrel of M. d'Artagnan——"

"You will of course leave me to deal with the matter," said De Wardes.

"Nay, on the contrary, for I draw my sword," said Buckingham, unsheathing it as he spoke; "for if M. d'Artagnan injured your father, he rendered, or at least did all that he could to render, a great service to mine."

De Wardes was thunderstruck.

"M. d'Artagnan," continued Buckingham, "is the bravest gentleman I know. I shall be delighted, as I owe him many personal obligations, to settle them with you, by crossing my sword with yours." At the same moment Buckingham drew his sword gracefully from its scabbard, saluted Raoul, and put himself on guard.

De Wardes advanced a step to meet him.

"Stay gentlemen," said Raoul, advancing towards them, and placing his own drawn sword between the combatants, "the affair is hardly worth the trouble of blood being shed almost in the presence of the princess. M. de Wardes speaks ill of M. d'Artagnan, with whom he is not even acquainted."

"What, monsieur," said De Wardes, setting his teeth hard together, and resting the point of his sword on the toe of his boot, "do you assert that I do not know M. d'Artagnan?"

"Certainly not; you do not know him," replied Raoul, coldly, "and you are even not aware where he is to be found."

"Not know where he is?"

"Such must be the case, since you fix your quarrel with him upon strangers, instead of seeking M. d'Artagnan where he is to be found." De Wardes turned pale. "Well,

monsieur," continued Raoul. "I will tell you where M. d'Artagnan is: he is now in Paris; when on duty he is to be met with at the Louvre,—when not on duty, in the Rue des Lombards. M. d'Artagnan can be easily discovered at either of those two places. Having, therefore, as you assert, so many causes of complaint against him, show your courage in seeking him out, and afford him an opportunity of giving you that satisfaction you seem to ask of every one but of himself." De Wardes passed his hand across his forehead, which was covered with perspiration. "For shame, M. de Wardes! so quarrelsome a disposition is hardly becoming after the publication of the edicts against duels. Pray think of that; the king will be incensed at our disobedience, particularly at such a time,—and his majesty will be in the right."

"Excuses," murmured De Wardes; "mere pretexts."

"Really, M. De Wardes," resumes Raoul, "such remarks are the idlest bluster. You know very well that the Duke of Buckingham is a man of undoubted courage, who has already fought ten duels, and will probably fight eleven. His name alone is significant enough. As far as I am concerned, you are well aware that I can fight also. I fought at Sens, at Bleneau, at the Dunes in front of the artillery, a hundred paces in front of the line, while you—I say this parenthetically—were a hundred paces behind it. True it is, that on that occasion there was far too great a concourse of persons present for your courage to be observed, and on that account perhaps, you did not reveal it; while here, it would be a display, and would excite remark—you wish that others should talk about you, in what manner you do not care. Do not depend upon me, M. de Wardes, to assist you in your designs, for I shall certainly not afford you that pleasure."

"Sensibly observed," said Buckingham, putting up his sword, "and I ask your forgiveness, M. de Bragelonne,

for having allowed myself to yield to a first impulse."

De Wardes, however, on the contrary, perfectly furious, bounded forward and raised his sword, threateningly, against Raoul, who had scarcely time to put himself in a posture of defense.

"Take care, monsieur," said Bragelonne, tranquilly, "or you will put out one of my eyes."

"You will not fight, then?" said De Wardes.

"Not at this moment; but this I promise to do: immediately on our arrival at Paris I will conduct you to M. d'Artagnan, to whom you shall detail all the causes of complaint you have against him. M. d'Artagnan will solicit the king's permission to measure swords with you. The king will yield his consent, and when you shall have received the sword-thrust in due course, you will consider, in a calmer frame of mind, the precepts of the Gospel, which enjoin forgetfulness of injuries."

"Ah!" exclaimed De Wardes, furious at this imperturbable coolness, "one can clearly see you are half a bastard, M. de Bragelonne."

Raoul became as pale as death; his eyes flashed lightning, causing De Wardes involuntarily to fall back. Buckingham, also, who had perceived their expression, threw himself between the two adversaries, whom he had expected to see precipitate themselves on each other. De Wardes had reserved this injury for the last; he clasped his sword firmly in his hand, and awaited the encounter. "You are right, monsieur," said Raoul, mastering his emotion, "I am only acquainted with my father's name; but I know too well that the Comte de la Fère is too upright and honorable a man to allow me to fear for a single moment that there is, as you insinuate, any stain upon my birth. My ignorance, therefore, of my mother's name is a misfortune for me, and not a reproach. You are deficient in loyalty of conduct; you are wanting in

courtesy, in reproaching me with misfortune. It matters little, however, the insult has been given, and I consider myself insulted accordingly. It is quite understood, then, that after you shall have received satisfaction from M. d'Artagnan, you will settle your quarrel with me."

"I admire your prudence, monsieur," replied De Wardes with a bitter smile; "a little while ago you promised me a sword-thrust from M. d'Artagnan, and now, after I shall have received his, you offer me one from yourself."

"Do not disturb yourself," replied Raoul, with concentrated anger; "in all affairs of that nature, M. d'Artagnan is exceedingly skillful, and I will beg him as a favor to treat you as he did your father; in other words, to spare your life at least, so as to leave me the pleasure, after your recovery, of killing you outright; for you have the heart of a viper, M. de Wardes, and in very truth, too many precautions cannot be taken against you."

"I shall take my precautions against you," said De Wardes, "be assured of it."

"Allow me, monsieur," said Buckingham, "to translate your remark by a piece of advice I am about to give M. de Bragelonne; M. de Bragelonne, wear a cuirass."

De Wardes clenched his hands. "Ah!" said he, "you two gentlemen intend to wait until you have taken that precaution before you measure your swords against mine."

"Very well, monsieur," said Raoul, "since you positively will have it so, let us settle the affair now." And, drawing his sword he advanced towards De Wardes.

"What are you going to do?" said Buckingham.

"Be easy," said Raoul, "it will not be very long."

De Wardes placed himself on his guard; their swords crossed. De Wardes flew upon Raoul with such impetuosity, that at the first clashing of the steel blades Buckingham clearly saw that Raoul was only trifling with his

adversary. Buckingham stepped aside, and watched the combat. Raoul was as calm as if he were handling a foil, instead of a sword; having retreated a step, he parried three or four fierce thrusts which De Wardes made at him, caught the sword of the latter within his own, and sent it flying twenty paces the other side of the barrier. Then as De Wardes stood disarmed and astounded at his defeat Raoul sheathed his sword, seized him by the collar and the waist-band, and hurled his adversary to the other end of the barrier, trembling and mad with rage.

"We shall meet again," murmured De Wardes, rising from the ground and picking up his sword.

"I have done nothing for the last hour," said Raoul, "but say the same thing." Then, turning towards the duke, he said, "I entreat you to be silent about this affair; I am ashamed to have gone so far, but my anger carried me away, and I ask your forgiveness for it;—forget it, too."

"Dear viscount," said the duke, pressing within his own the vigorous and valiant hand of his companion, "allow me, on the contrary, to remember it, and to look after your safety; that man is dangerous,—he will kill you."

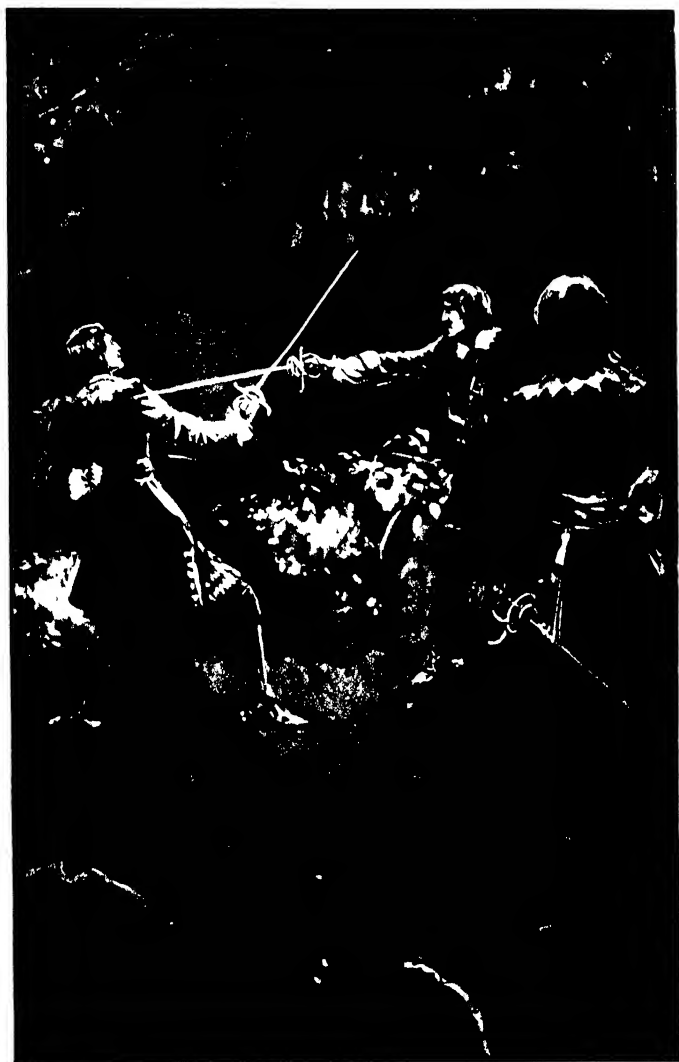
"My father," replied Raoul, "lived for twenty years under the menace of a much more formidable enemy, and he still lives."

"Your father had good friends, viscount."

"Yes," sighed Raoul, "such friends, indeed, that none are now left like them."

"Do not say that, I beg, at the very moment I offer you my friendship;" and Buckingham opened his arms to embrace Raoul, who delightedly received the proffered alliance. "In my family," added Buckingham, "you are aware, M. de Bragelonne, we die to save our friends."

"I know it well, duke," replied Raoul.



THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN RAOUL AND M. DE WARDEN.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN ACCOUNT OF WHAT THE CHEVALIER DE LORRAINE THOUGHT
OF MADAME.

Nothing further interrupted the journey. Under a pretext that was little remarked, M. de Wardes went forward in advance of the others. He took Manicamp with him, for his equable and dreamy disposition acted as a counterpoise to his own. It is a subject of remark, that quarrelsome and restless characters invariably seek the companionship of gentle, timorous dispositions, as if the former sought, in the contrast, a repose for their own ill-humor, and the latter a protection for their weakness. Buckingham and Bragelonne admitting De Guiche into their friendship, in concert with him, sang the praises of the princess during the whole of the journey. Bragelonne had, however, insisted that their three voices should be in concert, instead of singing in solo parts, as De Guiche and his rival seemed to have acquired a dangerous habit of investigation. This style of harmony pleased the queen-mother exceedingly, but it was not perhaps so agreeable to the young princess, who was an incarnation of coquetry, and who, without any fear as far as her own voice was concerned, sought opportunities of so perilously distinguishing herself. She possessed one of those fearless and incautious dispositions that find gratification in an excess of sensitiveness of feeling, and for whom, also, danger has a certain fascination. And so her glances, her smiles, her toilette, an inexhaustible armory of weapons of offense, were showered on the three young men with overwhelming force; and, from her well-stored arsenal issued glances,

kindly recognitions, and a thousand other little charming attentions which were intended to strike at long range, the gentlemen who formed the escort, the townspeople, the officers of the different cities she passed through, pages, populace, and servants ; it was wholesale slaughter, a general devastation. By the time Madame arrived at Paris, she had reduced to slavery about a hundred thousand lovers : and brought in her train to Paris half a dozen men who were almost mad about her, and *two* who were, indeed, literally out of their minds. Raoul was the only person who divined the power of this woman's attraction, and, as his heart was already engaged, he arrived in the capital full of indifference and distrust. Occasionally during the journey he conversed with the queen of England respecting the power of fascination which Madame possessed, and the mother, whom so many misfortunes and deceptions had taught experience, replied : " Henrietta was sure to be illustrious in one way or another, whether born in a palace or born in obscurity ; for she is a woman of great imagination, capricious, and self-willed." De Wardes and Manicamp, in their self-assumed character of courtiers had announced the princess's arrival. The procession was met at Nanterre by a brilliant escort of cavaliers and carriages. It was Monsieur himself, followed by the Chevalier de Lorraine and by his favorites, the latter being themselves followed by a portion of the king's military household, who had arrived to meet his affianced bride. At St. Germain, the princess and her mother had changed their heavy traveling carriage, somewhat impaired by the journey, for a light, richly decorated chariot drawn by six horses with white and gold harness. Seated in this open carriage, as though upon a throne, and beneath a parasol of embroidered silk, fringed with feathers, sat the young and lovely princess, on whose beaming face were reflected the softened rose-tints which suited her delicate

skin to perfection. Monsieur, on reaching the carriage, was struck by her beauty ; he showed his admiration in so marked a manner that the Chevalier de Lorraine shrugged his shoulders as he listened to his compliments, while Buckingham and De Guiche were almost heart-broken. After the usual courtesies had been rendered, and the ceremony completed, the procession slowly resumed the road to Paris. The presentations had been carelessly made, and Buckingham, with the rest of the English gentlemen, had been introduced to Monsieur, from whom they had received but very indifferent attention. But, during their progress, as he observed that the duke devoted himself with his accustomed earnestness to the carriage-door, he asked the Chevalier de Lorraine, his inseparable companion, "Who is that cavalier?"

"He was presented to your highness a short while ago ; it is the handsome Duke of Buckingham."

"Ah, yes, I remember."

"Madame's knight," added the favorite, with an inflection of the voice which envious minds can alone give to the simplest phrases.

"What do you say?" replied the prince.

"I said 'Madame's knight.'"

"Has she a recognized knight, then?"

"One would think you can judge of that for yourself ; look, only, how they are laughing and flirting. All three of them."

"What do you mean by *all three*?"

"Do you not see that De Guiche is one of the party?"

"Yes, I see. But what does that prove?"

"That Madame has two admirers, instead of one."

"You poison the simplest thing!"

"I poison nothing. Ah ! your royal highness's mind is perverted. The honors of the kingdom of France are being paid to your wife and you are not satisfied."

"The Duke of Orleans dreaded the satirical humor of the Chevalier de Lorraine whenever it reached a certain degree of bitterness, and he changed the conversation abruptly. "The princess is pretty," said he, very negligently, as if he were speaking of a stranger.

"Yes," replied the chevalier, in the same tone.

"You say 'yes' like a 'no.' She has very beautiful black eyes."

"Yes, but small."

"That is so, but they are brilliant. She is tall, and of a good figure."

"I fancy she stoops a little, my lord?"

"I do not deny it. She has a noble appearance."

"Yes, but her face is thin."

"I thought her teeth beautiful."

"They can easily be seen, for her mouth is large enough. Decidedly, I was wrong, my lord; you are certainly handsomer than your wife."

"But do you think me as handsome as Buckingham?"

"Certainly, and he thinks so, too; for look, my lord, he is redoubling his attentions to Madame to prevent your effacing the impression he has made."

Monsieur made a movement of impatience, but as he noticed a smile of triumph pass across the chevalier's lips, he drew up his horse to a foot-pace. "Why," said he, "should I occupy myself any longer about my cousin? Do I not already know her? Were we not brought up together? Did I not see her at the Louvre when she was quite a child?"

"A great change has taken place in her since then, prince. At the period you allude to, she was somewhat less brilliant, and scarcely so proud, either. One evening, particularly, you may remember, my lord, the king refused to dance with her, because he thought her plain and badly dressed!"

These words made the Duke of Orleans frown. It was by no means flattering for him to marry a princess of whom, when young, the king had not thought much. He would probably have retorted, but at this moment De Guiche quitted the carriage to join the prince. He had remarked the prince and the chevalier together, and full of anxious attention; he seemed to try and guess the nature of the remarks which they had just exchanged. The chevalier, whether he had some treacherous object in view, or from imprudence, did not take the trouble to dissimulate. "Count," he said, "you're a man of excellent taste."

"Thank you for the compliment," replied De Guiche; "but why do you say that?"

"Well, I appeal to His Highness."

"No doubt of it," said Monsieur; "and Guiche knows perfectly well that I regard him as a most finished cavalier."

"Well, since that is decided, I resume. You have been in the princess's society, count, for the last eight days, have you not?"

"Yes," replied De Guiche, coloring in spite of himself.

"Well then, tell us frankly, what do you think of her personal appearance?"

"Of her personal appearance?" returned De Guiche, stupefied.

"Yes; of her appearance, of her mind, of herself, in fact."

Astounded by this question, De Guiche hesitated answering.

"Come, come, De Guiche," resumed the chevalier, laughingly, "tell us your opinion frankly: the prince commands it."

"Yes, yes," said the prince, "be frank."

De Guiche stammered out a few unintelligible words.

"I am perfectly well aware," returned Monsieur, "that

the subject is a delicate one, but you know you can tell me everything. What do you think of her?"

In order to avoid betraying his real thoughts, De Guiche had recourse to the only defense which a man taken by surprise really has, and accordingly told an untruth. "I do not find Madame," he said, "either good or bad looking, yet rather good than bad looking."

"What! count," exclaimed the chevalier, "you who went into such ecstasies and uttered so many exclamations at the sight of her portrait."

De Guiche colored violently. Very fortunately his horse, which was slightly restive, enabled him by a sudden plunge to conceal his agitation. "What portrait?" he murmured, joining them again. The chevalier had not taken his eyes off him.

"Yes, the portrait. Was not the miniature a good likeness?"

"I do not remember. I had forgotten the portrait; it quite escaped my recollection."

"And yet it made a very marked impression upon you," said the chevalier.

"That is not unlikely."

"Is she witty, at all events?" inquired the duke.

"I believe so, my lord."

"Is M. de Buckingham witty too?" said the chevalier.

"I do not know."

"My own opinion is, that he must be," replied the chevalier, "for he makes Madame laugh, and she seems to take no little pleasure in his society, which never happens to a clever woman when in the company of a simpleton."

"Of course, then, he must be clever," said De Guiche, simply.

At this moment Raoul opportunely arrived, seeing how De Guiche was pressed by his dangerous questioner, to

whom he addressed a remark, and in that way changed the conversation. The *entrée* was brilliant and joyous.

The king, in honor of his brother, had directed that the festivities should be on a scale of the greatest possible magnificence. Madame and her mother alighted at the Louvre, where, during their exile they had so gloomily submitted to obscurity, misery, and privations of every description. That palace, which had been so inhospitable a residence for the unhappy daughter of Henry IV., the naked walls, the uneven floorings, the ceilings matted with cobwebs, the vast dilapidated chimney-places, the cold hearths on which the charity extended to them by parliament hardly permitted a fire to glow, was completely altered in appearance. The richest hangings and the thickest carpets, glistening flagstones,* and pictures, with their richly-gilded frames; in every direction could be seen candelabra, mirrors, and furniture and fittings of the most sumptuous character; in every direction also were guards of the proudest military bearing with floating plumes, crowds of attendants and courtiers in the antechambers and upon the staircases. In the courtyards, where the grass had formerly been allowed to luxuriate, as if the ungrateful Mazarin had thought it a good idea to let the Parisians perceive that solitude and disorder were, with misery and despair, the fit accompaniments of fallen monarchy; the immense courtyards, formerly silent and desolate, were now thronged with courtiers whose horses were pacing and prancing to and fro. The carriages were filled with young and beautiful women, who awaited the opportunity of saluting, as she passed, the daughter of that daughter of France who, during her widowhood and exile, had sometimes gone without wood for her fire, and bread for her table, whom the meanest attendants at the château had treated with indifference and contempt. And so, Madame Henrietta once more returned to the

Louvre, with her heart more swollen with bitter recollections than her daughter's, whose disposition was fickle and forgetful, with triumph and delight. She knew but too well this brilliant reception was paid to the happy mother of a king restored to his throne, a throne second to none in Europe, while the worse than indifferent reception she had before met with was paid to her, the daughter of Henry IV., as a punishment for having been unfortunate. After the princesses had been installed in their apartments and had rested, the gentlemen who had formed their escort, having, in like manner, recovered from their fatigue, they resumed their accustomed habits and occupations. Raoul began by setting off to see his father, who had left for Blois. He then tried to see M. d'Artagnan, who, however, being engaged in the organization of a military household for the king, could not be found anywhere. Bragelonne next sought out De Guiche, but the count was occupied in a long conference with his tailors and with Manicamp, which consumed his whole time. With the Duke of Buckingham he fared still worse, for the duke was purchasing horses after horses, diamonds upon diamonds. He monopolized every embroiderer, jeweler, and tailor that Paris could boast of. Between De Guiche and himself a vigorous contest ensued, invariably a courteous one, in which, in order to insure success, the duke was ready to spend a million; while the Maréchal de Grammont had only allowed his son 60,000 francs. So Buckingham laughed and spent his money. Guiche groaned in despair, and would have shown it more violently, had it not been for the advice De Bragelonne gave him.

"A million!" repeated De Guiche daily; "I must submit. Why will not the maréchal advance me a portion of my patrimony?"

"Because you would throw it away," said Raoul.

"What can that matter to him? If I am to die of it, I shall die of it, and then I shall need nothing further."

"But what need is there to die?" said Raoul.

"I do not wish to be conquered in elegance by an Englishman."

"My dear count," said Manicamp, "elegance is not a costly commodity, it is only a very difficult accomplishment."

"Yes, but difficult things cost a good deal of money, and I have only got 60,000 francs."

"A very embarrassing state of things, truly," said De Wardes; "even if you spent as much as Buckingham, there is only 940,000 francs difference."

"Where am I to find them?"

"Get into debt."

"I am in debt already."

"A greater reason for getting further."

Advice like this resulted in De Guiche becoming excited to such an extent that he committed extravagances where Buckingham only incurred expenses. The rumor of this extravagant profuseness delighted the hearts of all the shopkeepers in Paris; from the hotel of the Duke of Buckingham to that of the Comte de Grammont nothing but miracles were attempted. While all this was going on, Madame was resting herself, and Bragelonne was engaged in writing to Mademoiselle de la Vallière. He had already dispatched four letters, and not an answer to any one of them had been received, when, on the very morning fixed for the marriage ceremony, which was to take place in the chapel at the Palais Royal, Raoul, who was dressing, heard his valet announce M. de Malicorne. "What can this Malicorne want with me?" thought Raoul; and then said to his valet, "Let him wait."

"It is a gentleman from Blois," said the valet.

"Admit him at once," said Raoul, eagerly.

Malicorne entered as brilliant as a star, and wearing a superb sword at his side. After having saluted Raoul most gracefully, he said: "M. de Bragelonne, I am the bearer of a thousand compliments from a lady to you."

Raoul colored. "From a lady," said he, "from a lady of Blois?"

"Yes, monsieur; from Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Thank you, monsieur; I recollect you now," said Raoul. "And what does Mademoiselle de Montalais require of me?"

Malicorne drew four letters from his pocket, which he offered to Raoul.

"My own letters, is it possible?" he said, turning pale; "my letters, and the seals unbroken?"

"Monsieur, your letters did not find, at Blois, the person to whom they were addressed, and so they are now returned to you."

"Mademoiselle de la Vallière has left Blois, then?" exclaimed Raoul.

"Eight days ago."

"Where is she, then?"

"In Paris."

"How was it known that these letters were from me?"

"Mademoiselle de Montalais recognized your handwriting and your seal," said Malicorne.

Raoul colored and smiled. "Mademoiselle de Montalais is exceedingly amiable," he said; "she is always kind and charming."

"Always, monsieur."

"Surely she could give me some precise information about Mademoiselle de la Vallière. I never could find her in this immense city."

Malicorne drew another packet from his pocket. "You may possibly find in this letter what you are anxious to learn."

Raoul hurriedly broke the seal. The writing was that of Mademoiselle Aure, and inclosed were these words:—

“Paris, Palais-Royal. The day of the nuptial blessing.”

“What does this mean?” inquired Raoul of Malicorne; “you probably know?”

“I do, monsieur.”

“For pity’s sake, tell me, then.”

“Impossible, monsieur.”

“Why so?”

“Because Mademoiselle Aure has forbidden me to do so.”

Raoul looked at his strange visitor, and remained silent;—“At least, tell me whether it is fortunate or unfortunate.”

“That you will see.”

“You are very severe in your reservations.”

“Will you grant me a favor, monsieur?” said Malicorne.

“In exchange for that you refuse me?”

“Precisely.”

“What is it?”

“I have the greatest desire to see the ceremony, and I have no ticket to admit me, in spite of all the steps I have taken to secure one. Could you get me admitted?”

“Certainly.”

“Do me this kindness, then, I entreat.”

“Most willingly, monsieur; come with me.”

“I am exceedingly indebted to you, monsieur,” said Malicorne.

“I thought you were a friend of M. de Manicamp.”

“I am, monsieur; but this morning I was with him as he was dressing, and I let a bottle of blacking fall over his new dress, and he flew at me sword in hand, so that I was obliged to make my escape. That is the reason I could not ask him for a ticket. He wanted to kill me.”

"I can well believe it," laughed Raoul. "I know Manicamp is capable of killing a man who has been unfortunate enough to commit the crime you have to reproach yourself with, but I will repair the mischief as far as you are concerned. I will but fasten my cloak, and shall then be ready to serve you, not only as a guide, but as your introducer, too."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SURPRISE FOR MADAME DE MONTALAIS.

MADAME's marriage was celebrated in the chapel of the Palais Royal, in the presence of a crowd of courtiers, who had been most scrupulously selected. However, notwithstanding the marked favor which an invitation indicated, Raoul, faithful to his promise to Malicorne, who was so anxious to witness the ceremony, obtained admission for him. After he had fulfilled this engagement, Raoul approached De Guiche, who, as if in contrast with his magnificent costume, exhibited a countenance so utterly dejected, that the Duke of Buckingham was the only one present who could contend with him as far as pallor and discomfiture were concerned.

"Take care, count," said Raoul, approaching his friend, and preparing to support him at the moment the archbishop blessed the married couple. In fact, the Prince of Condé was attentively scrutinizing these two images of desolation, standing like caryatides on either side of the nave of the church. The count, after that, kept a more careful watch over himself.

At the termination of the ceremony, the king and queen passed onward towards the grand reception-room, where Madame and her suite were to be presented to them. It

was remarked that the king, who had seemed more than surprised at his sister-in-law's appearance, was most flattering in his compliments to her. Again, it was remarked that the queen-mother, fixing a long and thoughtful gaze upon Buckingham, leaned towards Madame de Motteville as though to ask her, "Do you not see how much he resembles his father?" and finally it was remarked that Monsieur watched everybody, and seemed quite discontented. After the reception of the princess and ambassadors, Monsieur solicited the king's permission to present to him as well as to Madame the persons belonging to their new household.

"Are you aware, vicomte," inquired the Prince de Condé of Raoul, "whether the household has been selected by a person of taste, and whether there are any faces worth looking at?"

"I have not the slightest idea, monseigneur," replied Raoul.

"You affect ignorance, surely."

"In what way, monseigneur?"

"You are a friend of De Guiche, who is one of the friends of the prince."

"That may be so, monseigneur; but the matter having no interest whatever for me, I never questioned De Guiche on the subject; and De Guiche on his part, never having been questioned, did not communicate any particulars to me."

"But Manicamp?"

"It is true I saw Manicamp at Havre, and during the journey here, but I was no more inquisitive with him than I had been towards De Guiche. Besides, is it likely that Manicamp should know anything of such matters? for he is a person of only secondary importance."

"My dear vicomte, do you not know better than that?" said the prince; "why, it is these persons of secondary

importance who, on such occasions, have all the influence; and the truth is, that nearly everything has been done through Manicamp's presentations to De Guiche, and through De Guiche to Monsieur."

"I assure you, monseigneur, I was ignorant of that," said Raoul, "and what your highness does me the honor to impart is perfectly new to me."

"I will most readily believe you, although it seems incredible; besides we shall not have long to wait. See, the flying squadron is advancing, as good Queen Catherine used to say. Ah! ah! what pretty faces!"

A bevy of young girls at this moment entered the *salon*, conducted by Madame de Navailles, and to Manicamp's credit be it said, if indeed he had taken that part in their selection which the Prince de Condé assigned him, it was a display calculated to dazzle those who, like the prince, could appreciate every character and style of beauty. A young, fair-complexioned girl, from twenty to one-and-twenty years of age, and whose large blue eyes flashed, as she opened them, in the most dazzling manner, walked at the head of the band and was the first presented.

"Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente," said Madame de Navailles to Monsieur, who, as he saluted his wife, repeated, "Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente."

"Ah! ah!" said the Prince de Condé to Raoul, "*she* is presentable enough."

"Yes," said Raoul, "but has she not a somewhat haughty style?"

"Bah! we know these airs very well, vicomte; three months hence she will be tame enough. But look, there, indeed, is a pretty face."

"Yes," said Raoul, "and one I am acquainted with."

"Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais," said Madame de Navailles. The name and Christian name were carefully repeated by Monsieur.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Raoul, fixing his bewildered gaze upon the entrance-doorway.

"What's the matter?" inquired the prince; "was it Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais who made you utter such a 'Great heavens'?"

"No, monseigneur, no," replied Raoul, pale and trembling.

"Well, then, if it be not Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais, it is that pretty *blonde* who follows her. What beautiful eyes! She is rather thin, but has fascinations without number."

"Mademoiselle de la Baume le Blanc de la Vallière!" said Madame de Navailles; and, as this name resounded through his whole being, a cloud seemed to rise from his breast to his eyes, so that he neither saw nor heard anything more; and the prince, finding him nothing more than a mere echo which remained silent under his railleries, moved forward to inspect somewhat closer the beautiful girls whom his first glance had already particularized.

"Louise here! Louise a maid of honor to Madame!" murmured Raoul, and his eyes, which did not suffice to satisfy his reason, wandered from Louise to Montalais. The latter had already emancipated herself from her assumed timidity, which she only needed for the presentation and for her reverences.

Mademoiselle de Montalais, from the corner of the room to which she had retired, was looking with no slight confidence at the different persons present; and, having discovered Raoul, she amused herself with the profound astonishment which her own and her friend's presence there caused the unhappy lover. Her waggish and malicious look, which Raoul tried to avoid meeting, and which yet he sought inquiringly from time to time, placed him on the rack. As for Louise, whether from

natural timidity, or some other reason for which Raoul could not account, she kept her eyes constantly cast down ; intimidated, dazzled, and with impeded respiration, she withdrew herself as much as possible aside, unaffected even by the nudges Montalais gave her with her elbow. The whole scene was a perfect enigma for Raoul, the key to which he would have given anything to obtain. But no one was there who could assist him, not even Malicorne ; who, a little uneasy at finding himself in the presence of so many persons of good birth, and not a little discouraged by Montalais's bantering glances, had described a circle, and by degrees succeeded in getting a few paces from the prince, behind the group of maids of honor, and nearly within reach of Mademoiselle Aure's voice, she being the planet around which he, as her attendant satellite, seemed constrained to gravitate. As he recovered his self-possession, Raoul fancied he recognized voices on his right hand that were familiar to him, and he perceived De Wardes, De Guiche, and the Chevalier de Lorraine, conversing together. It is true they were talking in tones so low, that the sound of their words could hardly be heard in the vast apartment. To speak in that manner from any particular place without bending down, or turning round, or looking at the person with whom one may be engaged in conversation, is a talent that cannot be immediately acquired by new comers. Long study is needed for such conversations, which, without a look, gesture, or movement of the head, seem like the conversation of a group of statues. In fact, in the king's and the queen's grand assemblies, while their majesties were speaking, and while every one present seemed to be listening in the midst of the most profound silence, some of these noiseless conversations took place, in which adulation was not the prevailing feature. But Raoul was one among others exceedingly clever in this

art, so much a matter of etiquette, that from the movement of the lips, he was often able to guess the sense of the words.

"Who is that Montalais?" inquired De Wardes, "and that La Vallière? What country-town have we had sent here?"

"Montalais?" said the chevalier,—“oh, I know her; she is a good sort of a girl, whom we shall find amusing enough. La Vallière is a charming girl, slightly lame.”

"Ah! bah!" said De Wardes.

"Do not be absurd, De Wardes, there are some very characteristic and ingenious Latin axioms about lame ladies."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said De Guiche, looking at Raoul with uneasiness, "be a little careful, I entreat you."

But the uneasiness of the count, in appearance at least, was not needed. Raoul had preserved the firmest and most indifferent countenance, although he had not lost a word that passed. He seemed to keep an account of the insolence and license of the two speakers in order to settle matters with them at the earliest opportunity.

De Wardes seemed to guess what was passing in his mind, and continued :

"Who are these young ladies' lovers?"

"Montalais's lover?" said the chevalier.

"Yes, Montalais first."

"You, I, or De Guiche,—whoever likes, in fact."

"And the other?"

"Mademoiselle de la Vallière?"

"Yes."

"Take care, gentlemen," exclaimed De Guiche, anxious to put a stop to De Wardes' reply; "take care, Madame is listening to us."

Raoul thrust his hand up to the wrist into his *justau-*

corps in great agitation. But the very malignity which he saw was excited against these poor girls made him take a serious resolution. "Poor Louise," he thought, "has come here only with an honorable object in view, and under honorable protection; and I must learn what that object is which she has in view, and who it is that protects her." And following Malicorne's maneuver, he made his way toward the group of the maids of honor. The presentations were soon over. The king, who had done nothing but look at and admire Madame, shortly afterwards left the reception-room, accompanied by the two queens. The Chevalier de Lorraine resumed his place beside Monsieur, and, as he accompanied him, insinuated a few drops of the venom he had collected during the last hour, while looking at some of the faces in the court, and suspecting that some of their hearts might be happy. A few of the persons present followed the king as he quitted the apartment; but such of the courtiers as assumed an independence of character, and professed a gallantry of disposition, began to approach the ladies of the court. The prince paid his compliments to Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, Buckingham devoted himself to Madame Chalais and Mademoiselle de Lafayette, whom Madame had already distinguished by her notice, and whom she held in high regard. As for the Comte de Guiche, who had abandoned Monsieur as soon as he could approach Madame alone, he conversed, with great animation, with Madame de Valentinois, and with Mesdemoiselles de Créquy and de Châtillon.

Amid these varied political and amorous interests, Malicorne was anxious to gain Montalais's attention; but the latter preferred talking with Raoul, even if it were only to amuse herself with his innumerable questions and his astonishment. Raoul had gone direct to Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and had saluted her with the profoundest re-

spect, at which Louise blushed, and could not say a word. Montalais, however, hurried to her assistance.

"Well, monsieur le vicomte, here we are, you see."

"I do, indeed, see you," said Raoul smiling, "and it is exactly because you are here that I wish to ask for some explanation."

Malicorne approached the group with his most fascinating smile.

"Go away, Malicorne; really you are exceedingly indiscreet." At this remark Malicorne bit his lips and retired a few steps, without making any reply. His smile, however, changed its expression, and from its former frankness, became mocking in its expression.

"You wished for an explanation, M. Raoul?" inquired Montalais.

"It is surely worth one, I think; Mademoiselle de la Vallière a maid of honor to Madame!"

"Why should not she be a maid of honor, as well as myself?" inquired Montalais.

"Pray, accept my compliments, young ladies," said Raoul, who fancied he perceived they were not disposed to answer him in a direct manner.

"Your remark was not made in a very complimentary manner, vicomte."

"Mine?"

"Certainly; I appeal to Louise."

"M. de Bragelonne probably thinks the position is above my condition," said Louise, hesitatingly.

"Assuredly not," replied Raoul, eagerly; "you know very well that such is not my feeling; were you called upon to occupy a queen's throne, I should not be surprised; how much greater reason, then, such a position as this? The only circumstance that amazes me is, that I should have learned it only to-day, and that by the merest accident."

"That is true," replied Montalais, with her usual giddiness; "you know nothing about it, and there is no reason you should. M. de Bragelonne had written several letters to you, but your mother was the only person who remained behind at Blois, and it was necessary to prevent these letters falling into her hands; I intercepted them, and returned them to M. Raoul, so that he believed you were still at Blois while you were here in Paris, and had no idea whatever, indeed, how high you had risen in rank."

"Did you not inform M. Raoul, as I begged you to do?"

"Why should I? to give him an opportunity of making some of his severe remarks and moral reflections, and to undo what we had so much trouble in effecting? Certainly not."

"Am I so very severe, then?" said Raoul, inquiringly.

"Besides," said Montalais, "it is sufficient to say that it suited me. I was about setting off for Paris—you were away; Louise was weeping her eyes out; interpret that as you please; I begged a friend, a protector of mine, who had obtained the appointment for me, to solicit one for Louise; the appointment arrived. Louise left in order to get her costume prepared; as I had my own ready, I remained behind; I received your letters, and returned them to you, adding a few words, promising you a surprise. Your surprise is before you, monsieur, and seems to be a fair one enough; you have nothing more to ask. Come, M. Malicorne, it is now time to leave these young people together: they have many things to talk about; give me your hand; I trust that you appreciate the honor conferred upon you, M. Malicorne."

"Forgive me," said Raoul, arresting the giddy girl, and giving to his voice an intonation, the gravity of which contrasted with that of Montalais; "forgive me, but may I inquire the name of the protector you speak of; for if

protection be extended towards you, Mademoiselle Montalais,—for which, indeed, so many reasons exist,” added Raoul, bowing, “I do not see that the same reasons exist why Mademoiselle de la Vallière should be similarly cared for.”

“But, M. Raoul,” said Louise, innocently, “there is no difference in the matter, and I do not see why I should not tell it you myself; it was M. Malicorne who obtained it for me.”

Raoul remained for a moment almost stupefied, asking himself if they were trifling with him; he then turned round to interrogate Malicorne, but he had been hurried away by Montalais, and was already at some distance from them. Mademoiselle de la Vallière attempted to follow her friend, but Raoul, with gentle authority, detained her.

“Louise, one word, I beg.”

“But, M. Raoul,” said Louise, blushing, “we are alone. Every one has left. They will become anxious, and will be looking for us.”

“Fear nothing,” said the young man, smiling, “we are neither of us of sufficient importance for our absence to be remarked.”

“But I have my duty to perform, M. Raoul.”

“Do not be alarmed, I am acquainted with these usages of the court; you will not be on duty until to-morrow: a few minutes are at your disposal, which will enable you to give me the information I am about to have the honor to ask you for.”

• “How serious you are, M. Raoul!” said Louise.

“Because the circumstances are serious. Are you listening?”

“I am listening: I would only repeat, monsieur, that we are quite alone.”

“You are right,” said Raoul, and, offering her his hand,

he led the young girl into the gallery adjoining the reception-room, the windows of which looked out upon the courtyard. Every one hurried towards the middle window, which had a balcony outside, from which all the details of the slow and formal preparations for departure could be seen. Raoul opened one of the side windows, and then, being alone with Louise, said to her: "You know, Louise, that from my childhood I have regarded you as my sister, as one who has been the confidante of all my troubles, to whom I have intrusted all my hopes."

"Yes, M. Raoul," she answered softly; "yes, M. Raoul, I know that."

"You used, on your side, to show the same friendship towards me, and had the same confidence in me; why have you not, on this occasion, been my friend—why have you shown suspicion of me?"

Mademoiselle de la Vallière did not answer. "I fondly thought you loved me," said Raoul, whose voice became more and more agitated; "I fondly thought you consented to all the plans we had, together, laid down for our own happiness, at the time when we wandered up and down the walks of Cour-Cheverny, under the avenue of poplar trees leading to Blois. You do not answer me, Louise. Is it possible," he inquired, breathing with difficulty, "that you no longer love me?"

"I did not say so," replied Louise, softly.

"Oh! tell me the truth, I implore you. All my hopes in life are centered in you. I chose you for your gentle and simple tastes. Do not suffer yourself to be dazzled, Louise, now that you are in the midst of a court where all that is pure too soon becomes corrupt—where all that is young too soon grows old. Louise, close your ears, so as not to hear what may be said; shut your eyes, so as not to see the examples before you; shut your lips, that you may not inhale the corrupting influences about you.

Without falsehood or subterfuge, Louise, am I to believe what Mademoiselle de Montalais stated? Louise, did you come to Paris because I was no longer at Blois?"

La Vallière blushed and concealed her face in her hands.

"Yes, it was so, then!" exclaimed Raoul, delightedly; "that was, then, your reason for coming here. I love you as I never yet loved you. Thanks, Louise, for this devotion; but measures must be taken to place you beyond all insult, to shield you from every lure. Louise, a maid of honor, in the court of a young princess in these days of free manners and inconstant affections—a maid of honor is placed as an object of attack without having any means of defence afforded her; this state of things cannot continue; you must be married in order to be respected."

"Married?"

"Yes, here is my hand, Louise: will you place yours within it?"

"But your father?"

"My father leaves me perfectly free."

"Yet——"

"I understand your scruples, Louise; I will consult my father."

"Reflect, M. Raoul; wait."

"Wait! it is impossible. Reflect, Louise, when *you* are concerned, it would be insulting,—give me your hand, dear Louise; I am my own master. My father will consent, I know; give me your hand, do not keep me waiting thus. One word in answer, one word only; if not, I shall begin to think that, in order to change you forever, nothing more was needed than a single step in the palace, a single breath of favor, a smile from the queen, a look from the king."

Raoul had no sooner pronounced this latter word, than La Vallière became as pale as death, no doubt from fear

at seeing the young man excite himself. With a movement as rapid as thought, she placed both her hands in those of Raoul, and then fled, without adding a syllable; disappearing without casting a look behind her. Raoul felt his whole frame tremble at the contact of her hand; he received the compact as a solemn bargain wrung by affection from her child-like timidity.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CONSENT OF ATHOS.

RAOUL quitted the Palais Royal full of ideas that admitted no delay in execution. He mounted his horse in the courtyard, and followed the road to Blois, while the marriage festivities of Monsieur and the princess of England were being celebrated with exceeding animation by the courtiers, but to the despair of De Guiche and Buckingham. Raoul lost no time on the road, and in sixteen hours he arrived at Blois. As he traveled along, he marshaled his arguments in the most becoming manner. Fever also is an argument that cannot be answered, and Raoul had an attack. Athos was in his study, making additions to his memoirs, when Raoul entered, accompanied by Grimaud. Keen-sighted and penetrating, a mere glance at his son told him that something extraordinary had befallen him.

"You seem to come on a matter of importance," said he to Raoul, after he had embraced him, pointing to a seat.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the young man; "and I entreat you to give me the same kind attention that has never yet failed me."

"Speak, Raoul."

"I present the case to you, monsieur, free from all preface, for that would be unworthy of you. Mademoiselle de la Vallière is in Paris as one of Madame's maids of honor. I have pondered deeply on the matter; I love Mademoiselle de la Vallière above everything; and it is not proper to leave her in a position where her reputation, her virtue even, may be assailed. It is my wish, therefore, to marry her, monsieur, and I have come to solicit your consent to my marriage."

While this communication was being made to him, Athos maintained the profoundest silence and reserve. Raoul, who had begun his address with an assumption of self-possession, finished it by allowing a manifest emotion to escape him at every word. Athos fixed upon Bragelonne a searching look, overshadowed indeed by a slight sadness.

"You have reflected well upon it?" he inquired.

"Yes, monsieur."

"I believe you are already acquainted with my views respecting this alliance?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied Raoul, in a low tone of voice; "but you added, that if I persisted——"

"You do persist then?"

Bragelonne stammered out an almost unintelligible assent.

"Your passion," continued Athos, tranquilly, "must indeed be very great, since, notwithstanding my dislike to this union, you persist in wishing it."

Raoul passed his trembling hand across his forehead to remove the perspiration that collected there. Athos looked at him, and his heart was touched by pity. He rose and said,—

"It is no matter. My own personal feelings are not to be taken into consideration since yours are concerned; you need my assistance; I am ready to give it. Tell me what you want."

"Your kind indulgence, first of all, monsieur," said Raoul, taking hold of his hand.

"You have mistaken my feelings, Raoul, I have more than mere indulgence for you in my heart."

Raoul kissed as devotedly as a lover could have done the hand he held in his own.

"Come, come," said Athos, "I am quite ready ; what do you wish me to sign?"

"Nothing whatever, monsieur, only it would be very kind if you would take the trouble to write to the king, to whom I belong, and solicit his majesty's permission for me to marry Mademoiselle de la Vallière."

"Well thought, Raoul ! After, or rather before myself, you have a master to consult, that master being the king ; it is loyal in you to submit yourself voluntarily to this double proof ; I will grant your request without delay, Raoul."

The count approached the window, and, leaning out, called to Grimaud, who showed his head from an arbor covered with jasmine, which he was occupied in trimming.

"My horses, Grimaud," continued the count.

"Why this order, monsieur?" inquired Raoul.

"We shall set off in a few hours."

"Whither?"

"For Paris."

"Paris, monsieur?"

"Is not the king at Paris?"

"Certainly."

"Well, ought we not to go there?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Raoul, almost alarmed by this kind condescension. "I do not ask you to put yourself to such inconvenience, and a letter merely——"

"You mistake my position, Raoul ; it is not respectful that a simple gentleman, such as I am, should write to

his sovereign. I wish to speak, I ought to speak, to the king, and I will do so. We will go together, Raoul."

"You overpower me with your kindness, monsieur."

"How do you think his majesty is affected?"

"Towards me, monsieur?"

"Yes."

"Excellently well disposed."

"You *know* that to be so?" continued the count.

"The king has himself told me so."

"On what occasion?"

"Upon the recommendation of M. d'Artagnan, I believe, and on account of an affair in the Place de Grève, when I had the honor to draw my sword in the king's service. I have reason to believe that, vanity apart, I stand well with his majesty."

"So much the better."

"But I entreat you, monsieur," pursued Raoul, "not to maintain towards me your present grave and serious manner. Do not make me bitterly regret having listened to a feeling stronger than anything else."

"That is the second time you have said so, Raoul; it was quite unnecessary; you require my formal consent, and you have it. We need talk no more on the subject, therefore. Come and see my new plantations, Raoul."

The young man knew very well, that, after the expression of his father's wish, no opportunity of discussion was left him. He bowed his head, and followed his father into the garden. Athos slowly pointed out to him the grafts, the cuttings, and the avenues he was planting. This perfect repose of manner disconcerted Raoul extremely; the affection with which his own heart was filled seemed so great that the whole world could hardly contain it. How, then, could his father's heart remain void, and closed to its influence? Bragelonne, therefore, collecting all his courage, suddenly exclaimed,—

"It is impossible, monsieur, you can have any reason to reject Mademoiselle de la Vallière? In Heaven's name, she is so good, so gentle and pure, that your mind, so perfect in its penetration, ought to appreciate her accordingly. Does any secret repugnance, or any hereditary dislike, exist between you and her family?"

"Look, Raoul, at that beautiful lily of the valley," said Athos; "observe how the shade and the damp situation suit it, particularly the shadow which that sycamore-tree casts over it, so that the warmth, and not the blazing heat of the sun, filters through its leaves."

Raoul stopped, bit his lips, and then, with the blood mantling in his face, he said, courageously,—“One word of explanation, I beg, monsieur. You cannot forget that your son is a man.”

"In that case," replied Athos, drawing himself up with sternness, "prove to me that you are a man, for you do not show yourself a son. I begged you to wait the opportunity of forming an illustrious alliance. I would have obtained a wife for you from the first ranks of the rich nobility. I wish you to be distinguished by the splendor which glory and fortune confer, for nobility of descent you have already."

"Monsieur," exclaimed Raoul, carried away by a first impulse. "I was reproached the other day for not knowing who my mother was."

Athos turned pale; then, knitting his brows like the greatest of all the heathen deities:—"I am waiting to learn the reply you made," he demanded, in an imperious manner.

"Forgive me! oh, forgive me" murmured the young man, sinking at once from the lofty tone he had assumed.

"What is your reply, monsieur?" inquired the count, stamping his feet upon the ground.

"Monsieur, my sword was in my hand immediately,

my adversary placed himself on guard, I struck his sword over the palisade, and threw him after it."

"Why did you suffer him to live?"

"The king has prohibited dueling, and, at that moment, I was an ambassador of the king."

"Very well," said Athos, "but all the greater reason I should see his majesty."

"What do you intend to ask him?"

"Authority to draw my sword against the man who has inflicted this injury upon me."

"If I did not act as I ought to have done, I beg you to forgive me."

"Did I reproach you, Raoul?"

"Still, the permission you are going to ask from the king?"

"I will implore his majesty to sign your marriage-contract, but on one condition."

"Are conditions necessary with me, monsieur? Command, and you shall be obeyed."

"On one condition, I repeat," continued Athos; "that you tell me the name of the man who spoke of your mother in that way."

"What need is there that you should know his name; the offense was directed against myself, and the permission once obtained from his majesty, to revenge it is my affair."

"Tell me his name, monsieur."

"I will not allow you to expose yourself."

"Do you take me for a Don Diego? His name, I say."

"You insist upon it?"

"I demand it."

"The Vicomte de Wardes."

"Very well," said Athos, tranquilly, "I know him. But our horses are ready, I see; and, instead of delaying our departure for a couple of hours, we will set off at once. Come, monsieur."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MONSIEUR BECOMES JEALOUS OF THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

WHILE the Comte de la Fère was proceeding on his way to Paris, accompanied by Raoul, the Palais-Royal was the theater wherein a scene of what Molière would have called excellent comedy, was being performed. Four days had elapsed since his marriage, and Monsieur, having breakfasted very hurriedly, passed into his antechamber, frowning and out of temper. The repast had not been overagreeable. Madame had had breakfast served in her own apartment, and Monsieur had breakfasted almost alone: the Chevalier de Lorraine and Manicamp were the only persons present at the meal, which lasted three-quarters of an hour without a single syllable having been uttered. Manicamp, who was less intimate with his royal highness than the Chevalier de Lorraine, vainly endeavored to detect, from the expression of the prince's face, what had made him so ill-humored. The Chevalier de Lorraine, who had no occasion to speculate about anything, inasmuch as he knew all, ate his breakfast with that extraordinary appetite which the troubles of one's friends but stimulates, and enjoyed at the same time both Monsieur's ill-humor and the vexation of Manicamp. He seemed delighted, while he went on eating, to detain the prince, who was very impatient to move, still at table. Monsieur at times repented the ascendancy which he had permitted the Chevalier de Lorraine to acquire over him, and which exempted the latter from any observance of etiquette towards him. Monsieur was now in one of those

moods, but he dreaded as much as he liked the chevalier, and contented himself with nursing his anger without betraying it. Every now and then Monsieur raised his eyes to the ceiling, then lowered them towards the slices of *pâté* which the chevalier was attacking, and finally, not caring to betray his resentment, he gesticulated in a manner which Harlequin might have envied. At last, however, Monsieur could control himself no longer, and at the dessert, rising from the table in excessive wrath, as we have related, he left the Chevalier de Lorraine to finish his breakfast as he pleased. Seeing Monsieur rise from the table, Manicamp, napkin in hand, rose also. Monsieur ran rather than walked, towards the antechamber, where, noticing an usher in attendance, he gave him some directions in a low tone of voice. Then, turning back again, but avoiding passing through the breakfast apartment, he crossed several rooms, with the intention of seeking the queen-mother in her oratory, where she usually remained.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning. Anne of Austria was engaged in writing as Monsieur entered. The queen-mother was extremely attached to her son, for he was handsome in person and amiable in disposition. He was, in fact, more affectionate, and it might be, more effeminate than the king. He pleased his mother by those trifling sympathizing attentions all women are glad to receive. Anne of Austria, who would have been rejoiced to have had a daughter, almost found in this, her favorite son, the attentions, solicitude, and playful manners of a child of twelve years of age. All the time he passed with his mother he employed in admiring her arms, in giving his opinion upon her cosmetics, and receipts for compounding essences, in which she was very particular: and then, too, he kissed her hands and cheeks in the most childlike and endearing manner, and had always some sweetmeats to offer her, or some new style of dress to

recommend. Anne of Austria loved the king, or rather the regal power in her eldest son; Louis XIV. represented legitimacy by right divine. With the king, her character was that of the queen-mother, with Philip she was simply the mother. The latter knew that, of all places of refuge, a mother's heart is the most compassionate and surest. When quite a child, he always fled there for refuge when he and his brother quarreled, often, after having struck him, which constituted the crime of high treason on his part, after certain engagements with hands and nails, in which the king and his rebellious subject indulged in their night-dresses respecting the right to a disputed bed, having their servant Laporte as umpire,—Philip, conqueror, but terrified at victory, used to flee to his mother to obtain reinforcements from her, or at least the assurance of forgiveness, which Louis XIV. granted with difficulty, and after an interval. Anne, from this habit of peaceable intervention, succeeded in arranging the disputes of her sons, and in sharing, at the same time, all their secrets. The king, somewhat jealous of that maternal solicitude which was bestowed particularly upon his brother, felt disposed to show towards Anne of Austria more submission and attachment than his character really dictated. Anne of Austria had adopted this line of conduct especially towards the young queen. In this manner she ruled with almost despotic sway over the royal household, and she was already preparing her batteries to govern with the same absolute authority the household of her second son. Anne experienced almost a feeling of pride whenever she saw any one enter her apartment with woe-begone looks, pale cheeks, or red eyes, gathering from appearances that assistance was required either by the weakest or the most rebellious. She was writing, we have said, when Monsieur entered her oratory, not with red eyes or pale cheeks, but restless, out of temper,

and annoyed. With an absent air he kissed his mother's hands, and sat himself down before receiving her permission to do so. Considering the strict rules of etiquette established at the court of Anne of Austria, this forgetfulness of customary civilities was a sign of preoccupation, especially on Philip's part, who, of his own accord, observed a respect towards her of a somewhat exaggerated character. If, therefore, he so notoriously failed in this regard, there must be a serious cause for it.

"What is the matter, Philip?" inquired Anne of Austria, turning towards her son.

"A good many things," murmured the prince, in a doleful tone of voice.

"You look like a man who has a great deal to do," said the queen, laying down her pen. Philip frowned, but did not reply. "Among the various subjects which occupy your mind," said Anne of Austria, "there must surely be one that absorbs it more than others."

"One indeed has occupied me more than any other."

"Well, what is it? I am listening."

Philip opened his mouth as if to express all the troubles his mind was filled with, and which he seemed to be waiting only for an opportunity of declaring. But he suddenly became silent, and a sigh alone expressed all that his heart was overflowing with.

"Come, Philip, show a little firmness," said the queen-mother. "When one has to complain of anything, it is generally an individual who is the cause of it. Am I not right?"

"I do not say no, madame."

"Whom do you wish to speak about? Come, take courage."

"In fact, madame, what I might possibly have to say must be kept a profound secret; for when a lady is in the case——"

"Ah! you are speaking of Madame, then?" inquired the queen-mother, with a feeling of the liveliest curiosity.

"Yes."

"Well, then, if you wish to speak of Madame, do not hesitate to do so. I am your mother, and she is no more than a stranger to me. Yet, as she is my daughter-in-law, rest assured I shall be interested, even were it for your own sake alone, in hearing all you may have to say about her."

"Pray tell me, madame, in your turn, whether you have not remarked something?"

"Something! Philip? Your words almost frighten me, from their want of meaning. What do you mean by something?"

"Madame is pretty, certainly."

"No doubt of it."

"Yet not altogether beautiful."

"No, but as she grows older, she will probably become strikingly beautiful. You must have remarked the change which a few years have already made in her. Her beauty will improve more and more; she is now only sixteen years of age. At fifteen I was, myself, very thin; but even as she is at present, Madame is very pretty."

"And consequently others have remarked it."

"Undoubtedly, for a woman of ordinary rank is noticed—and with still greater reason a princess."

"She has been well brought up, I suppose?"

"Madame Henriette, her mother, is a woman somewhat cold in manner, slightly pretentious, but full of noble thoughts. The princess's education may have been neglected, but her principles, I believe, are good. Such at least was the opinion I formed of her when she resided in France; but she afterwards returned to England, and I am ignorant what may have occurred there."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that there are some heads naturally giddy, which are easily turned by prosperity."

"That is the very word, madame. I think the princess rather giddy."

"We must not exaggerate, Philip; she is clever and witty, and has a certain amount of coquetry very natural in a young woman; but this defect in persons of high rank and position, is a great advantage at a court. A princess who is tinged with coquetry, usually forms a brilliant court around her; her smile stimulates luxury, arouses wit, and even courage; the nobles, too, fight better for a prince whose wife is beautiful."

"Thank you extremely, madame," said Philip, with some temper; "you really have drawn some very alarming pictures for me."

"In what respect?" asked the queen, with pretended simplicity.

"You know, madame," said Philip, dolefully, "whether I had or had not a very great dislike to getting married."

"Now, indeed, you alarm me. You have some serious cause of complaint against Madame."

"I do not precisely say it is serious."

"In that case, then, throw aside your doleful looks. If you show yourself to others in your present state, people will take you for a very unhappy husband."

"The fact is," replied Philip, "I am not altogether satisfied as a husband, and I shall not be sorry if others know it."

"For shame, Philip."

"Well, then, madame, I will tell you frankly that I do not understand the life I am required to lead."

"Explain yourself."

"My wife does not seem to belong to me; she is always leaving me for some reason or another. In the mornings

there are visits, correspondences, and toilettes ; in the evenings, balls and concerts."

"You are jealous, Philip."

"I! Heaven forbid. Let others act the part of a jealous husband, not I. But I *am* annoyed."

"All these things you reproach your wife with are perfectly innocent, and, so long as you have nothing of greater importance—— Yet, listen; without being very blamable, a woman can excite a good deal of uneasiness. Certain visitors may be received, certain preferences shown, which expose young women to remark, and which are enough to drive out of their senses, even those husbands who are least disposed to be jealous."

"Ah! now we are coming to the real point at last, and not without some difficulty. You speak of frequent visits, and certain preferences—very good; for the last hour we have been beating about the bush, and at last you have broached the true question."

"This is more serious than I thought. It is possible, then, that Madame can have given you grounds for these complaints against her?"

"Precisely so."

"What, your wife, married only four days ago, prefers some other person to yourself! Take care, Philip, you exaggerate your grievances; in wishing to prove everything, you prove nothing."

The prince, bewildered by his mother's serious manner, wished to reply, but he could only stammer out some unintelligible words.

"You draw back, then?" said Anne of Austria. "I prefer that, as it is an acknowledgment of your mistake."

"No!" exclaimed Philip, "I do not draw back, and I will prove all I asserted. I spoke of preference and of visits, did I not? Well, listen."

Anne of Austria prepared herself to listen, with that love of gossip which the best woman living and the best mother, were she a queen even, always find in being mixed up with the petty squabbles of a household.

"Well," said Philip, "tell me one thing."

"What is that?"

"Why does my wife retain an English court about her?" said Philip, as he crossed his arms and looked his mother steadily in the face, as if he were convinced that she could not answer the question.

"For a very simple reason," returned Anne of Austria; "because the English are her countrymen, because they have expended large sums in order to accompany her to France, and because it would be hardly polite—not politic certainly—to dismiss abruptly those members of the English nobility who have not shrunk from any devotion or from any sacrifice."

"A wonderful sacrifice indeed," returned Philip, "to desert a wretched country to come to a beautiful one, where a greater effect can be produced for a crown than can be procured elsewhere for four! Extraordinary devotion, really, to travel a hundred leagues in company with a woman one is in love with?"

"In love, Philip! think what you are saying. Who is in love with Madame?"

"The Duke of Buckingham." Perhaps you will defend him, too?"

Anne of Austria blushed and smiled at the same time. The name of the Duke of Buckingham recalled certain recollections of a very tender and melancholy nature.

"The Duke of Buckingham?" she murmured.

"Yes; one of those arm-chair soldiers——"

"The Buckinghams are loyal and brave," said Anne of Austria, courageously.

"This is too bad; my own mother takes the part of my

wife's lover against me," exclaimed Philip, incensed to such an extent that his weak organization was affected almost to tears.

"Philip, my son," exclaimed Anne of Austria, "such an expression is unworthy of you. Your wife has no lover; and, had she one, it would not be the Duke of Buckingham. The members of that family, I repeat, are loyal and discreet, and the rights of hospitality are sure to be respected by them."

"The Duke of Buckingham is an Englishman, madame," said Philip, "and may I ask if the English so very religiously respect what belongs to princes of France?"

Anne blushed a second time, and turned aside under the pretext of taking her pen from her desk again, but in reality to conceal her confusion from her son. "Really, Philip," she said, "you seem to discover expressions for the purpose of embarrassing me, and your anger blinds you while it alarms me; reflect a little."

"There is no need for reflection, madame. I can see with my own eyes."

"Well, and what do you see?"

"That Buckingham never quits my wife. He presumes to make presents to her, and she ventures to accept them. Yesterday she was talking about *sachets à la violette*; well, our French perfumers, you know very well, madame, for you have over and over again asked for it without success—our French perfumers, I say, have never been able to procure this scent. The duke, however, wore about him a *sachet à la violette*, and I am sure that the one my wife has came from him."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Anne of Austria, "you build your pyramids on needle points; be careful. What harm, I ask you, can there be in a man giving to his country-woman a receipt for a new essence?" These strange ideas,

I protest, painfully recall your father to me ; he who so frequently and so unjustly made me suffer."

"The Duke of Buckingham's father was probably more reserved and more respectful than his son," said Philip, thoughtlessly, not perceiving how deeply he had wounded his mother's feelings. The queen turned pale, and pressed her clenched hands upon her bosom ; but, recovering herself immediately, she said, "You came here with some intention or another, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

"What was it?"

"I came, madame, intending to complain energetically, and to inform you that I will not submit to such behavior from the Duke of Buckingham."

"What do you intend to do, then?"

"I shall complain to the king."

"And what do you expect the king to reply?"

"Very well, then," said Monsieur, with an expression of stern determination on his countenance, which offered a singular contrast to its usual gentleness. "Very well. I will right myself!"

"What do you call righting yourself?" inquired Anne of Austria, in alarm.

"I will have the Duke of Buckingham quit the princess, I will have him quit France, and I will see that my wishes are intimated to him."

"You will intimate nothing of the kind, Philip," said the queen, "for if you act in that manner, and violate hospitality to that extent, I will invoke the severity of the king against you."

"Do you threaten me, madame?" exclaimed Philip, almost in tears ; "do you threaten me in the midst of my complaints?"

"I do not threaten you ; I do but place an obstacle in the path of your hasty anger. I maintain, that, to adopt

towards the Duke of Buckingham, or any other Englishman, any rigorous measure—to take even a discourteous step towards him, would be to plunge France and England into the most disastrous disagreement. Can it be possible that a prince of the blood, the brother of the king of France, does not know how to hide an injury, even did it exist in reality, where political necessity requires it?” Philip made a movement. “Besides,” continued the queen, “the injury is neither true nor possible, and it is merely a matter of silly jealousy.”

“Madame, I know what I know.”

“Whatever you may know, I can only advise you to be patient.”

“I am not patient by disposition, madame.”

The queen rose, full of severity, and with an icy ceremonious manner. “Explain what you really require, monsieur,” she said.

“I do not require anything, madame; I simply express what I desire. If the Duke of Buckingham does not, of his own accord, discontinue his visits to my apartments I shall forbid him entrance.”

“That is a point you will refer to the king,” said Anne of Austria, her heart swelling as she spoke, and her voice trembling with emotion.

“But, madame,” exclaimed Philip, striking his hands together, “act as my mother and not as the queen, since I speak to you as a son; it is simply a matter of a few minutes’ conversation between the duke and myself.”

“It is that very conversation I forbid,” said the queen, resuming her authority, “because it is unworthy of you.”

“Be it so; I will not appear in the matter, but I shall intimate my will to Madame.”

“Oh!” said the queen-mother, with a melancholy arising from reflection, “never tyrannize over a wife—never

behave too haughtily or imperiously towards your own. A woman, unwillingly convinced is unconvinced."

"What is to be done, then?—I will consult my friends about it."

"Yes, your double-dealing advisers, your Chevalier de Lorraine—your De Wardes. Intrust the conduct of this affair to me. You wish the Duke of Buckingham to leave, do you not?"

"As soon as possible, madame."

"Send the duke to me, then; smile upon your wife, behave to her, to the king, to every one, as usual. But follow no advice but mine. Alas! I too well know what any household comes to, that is troubled by advisers."

"You shall be obeyed, madame."

"And you will be satisfied at the result. Send the duke to me."

"That will not be difficult."

"Where do you suppose him to be?"

"At my wife's door, whose *levée* he is probably awaiting."

"Very well," said Anne of Austria, calmly. "Be good enough to tell the duke, that I shall be charmed if he will pay me a visit."

Philip kissed his mother's hand, and started off to find the Duke of Buckingham.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FOREVER!

THE Duke of Buckingham, obedient to the queen-mother's invitation, presented himself in her apartments half an hour after the departure of the Duc d'Orléans.

When his name was announced by the gentleman-usher in attendance, the queen, who was sitting with her elbow resting on a table, and her head buried in her hands, rose, and smilingly received the graceful and respectful salutation which the duke addressed to her. Anne of Austria was still beautiful. It is well known that at her then somewhat advanced age, her long auburn hair, perfectly formed hands, and bright ruby lips, were still the admiration of all who saw her. On the present occasion, abandoned entirely to a remembrance which evoked all the past in her heart, she looked almost as beautiful as in the days of her youth, when her palace was open to the visits of the Duke of Buckingham's father, then a young and impassioned man, as well as an unfortunate prince, who lived for her alone, and died with her name upon his lips. Anne of Austria fixed upon Buckingham a look so tender in its expression, that it denoted, not alone the indulgence of maternal affection, but a gentleness of expression like the coquetry of a woman who loves.

"Your majesty," said Buckingham, respectfully, "desired to speak to me."

"Yes, duke," said the queen, in English; "will you be good enough to sit down?"

The favor which Anne of Austria thus extended to the young man, and the welcome sound of the language of a country from which the duke had been estranged since his stay in France, deeply affected him. He immediately conjectured that the queen had a request to make of him. After having abandoned the few first moments to the irrepressible emotions he experienced, the queen resumed the smiling air with which she had received him. "What do you think of France?" she said, in French.

"It is a lovely country, madame," replied the duke.

"Had you ever seen it before?"

"Once only, madame."

"But, like all true Englishmen, you prefer England?"

"I prefer my own native land to France," replied the duke; "but if your majesty were to ask me which of the two cities, London or Paris, I should prefer as a residence, I should be forced to answer, Paris."

Anne of Austria observed the ardent manner with which these words had been pronounced. "I am told, my lord, you have rich possessions in your own country, and that you live in a splendid and time-honored palace."

"It was my father's residence," replied Buckingham, casting down his eyes.

"Those are indeed great advantages and *souvenirs*," replied the queen, alluding, in spite of herself, to recollections from which it is impossible voluntarily to detach one's self.

"In fact," said the duke, yielding to the melancholy influence of this opening conversation, "sensitive persons live as much in the past or the future, as in the present."

"That is very true," said the queen, in a low tone of voice. "It follows, then, my lord," she added, "that you, who are a man of feeling, will soon quit France in order to shut yourself up with your wealth and your relics of the past."

Buckingham raised his head and said, "I think not, madame."

"What do you mean?"

"On the contrary, I think of leaving England in order to take up my residence in France."

It was now Anne of Austria's turn to exhibit surprise. "Why?" she said. "Are you not in favor with the new king?"

"Perfectly so, madame, for his majesty's kindness to me is unbounded."

"It cannot," said the queen, "be because your fortune has diminished, for it is said to be enormous."

"My income, madame, has never been so large."

"There is some secret cause, then?"

"No, madame," said Buckingham, eagerly, "there is nothing secret in my reason for this determination. I prefer residence in France; I like a court so distinguished by its refinement and courtesy; I like the amusements, somewhat serious in their nature, which are not the amusements of my own country, and which are met with in France."

Anne of Austria smiled shrewdly. "Amusements of a serious nature?" she said. "Has your grace well reflected on their seriousness?" The duke hesitated. "There is no amusement so serious," continued the queen, "as to prevent a man of your rank——"

"Your majesty seems to insist greatly on that point," interrupted the duke.

"Do you think so, my lord?"

"If you will forgive me for saying so, it is the second time you have vaunted the attractions of England at the expense of the delight which all experience who live in France."

Anne of Austria approached the young man, and placing her beautiful hand upon his shoulder, which trembled at the touch, said, "Believe me, monsieur, nothing can equal a residence in one's own native country. I have very frequently had occasion to regret Spain. I have lived long, my lord, very long for a woman, and I confess to you, that not a year has passed I have not regretted Spain."

"Not one year, madame?" said the young duke, coldly. "Not one of those years when you reigned Queen of Beauty—as you still are, indeed?"

"A truce to flattery, duke, for I am old enough to be your mother." She emphasized these latter words in a manner, and with a gentleness, which penetrated Buck-

ingham's heart. "Yes," she said, "I am old enough to be your mother; and for this reason, I will give you a word of advice."

"That advice being that I should return to London?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my lord."

The duke clasped his hands with a terrified gesture, which could not fail of its effect upon the queen, already disposed to softer feelings by the tenderness of her own recollections. "It must be so," added the queen.

"What!" he again exclaimed, "am I seriously told that I *must* leave,—that I must exile myself,—that I *am* to flee at once?"

"Exile yourself, did you say? One would fancy France was your native country."

"Madame, the country of those who love is the country of those whom they love."

"Not another word, my lord; you forget whom you are addressing."

Buckingham threw himself on his knees. "Madame, you are the source of intelligence, of goodness, and of compassion; you are the first person in this kingdom, not only by your rank, but the first person in the world on account of your angelic attributes. I have said nothing, madame. Have I, indeed, said anything you should answer with such a cruel remark? What have I betrayed?"

"You have betrayed yourself," said the queen, in a low tone of voice.

"I have said nothing,—I know nothing."

"You forget you have spoken and thought in the presence of a woman; and besides——"

"Besides," said the duke, "no one knows you are listening to me."

"On the contrary, it is known; you have all the defects and all the qualities of youth."

"I have been betrayed or denounced, then?"

"By whom?"

"By those who, at Havre, had, with infernal perspicacity, read my heart like an open book."

"I do not know whom you mean."

"M. de Bragelonne, for instance."

"I know the name without being acquainted with the person to whom it belongs. M. de Bragelonne has said nothing."

"Who can it be, then? If any one, madame, had had the boldness to notice in me that which I do not myself wish to behold——"

"What would you do, duke?"

"There are secrets which kill those who discover them."

"He, then, who has discovered your secret, madman that you are, still lives: and, what is more, you will not slay him, for he is armed on all sides,—he is a husband, a jealous man,—he is the second gentleman in France,—he is my son, the Duc d'Orléans."

The duke turned pale as death. "You are very cruel, madame," he said.

"You see, Buckingham," said Anne of Austria, sadly, "how you pass from one extreme to another, and fight with shadows, when it would seem so easy to remain at peace with yourself."

"If we fight, madame, we die on the field of battle," replied the young man, gently, abandoning himself to the most gloomy depression."

Anne ran towards him and took him by the hand. "Villiers," she said, in English, with a vehemence of tone which nothing could resist, "what is it you ask? Do you ask a mother to sacrifice her son: a queen to consent to the dishonor of her house? Child that you are, do not dream of it. What! in order to spare your tears am I to commit these crimes? Villiers! you speak of the dead;

the dead, at least, were full of respect and submission; they resigned themselves to an order of exile; they carried their despair away with them in their hearts, like a priceless possession, because the despair was caused by the woman they loved, and because death, thus deceptive, was like a gift or a favor conferred upon them."

Buckingham rose, his features distorted, and his hands pressed against his heart. "You are right, madame," he said, "but those of whom you speak had received their order of exile from the lips of the one whom they loved; they were not driven away; they were entreated to leave, and were not laughed at."

"No," murmured Anne of Austria, "they were not forgotten. But who says you are driven away, or that you are exiled? Who says that your devotion will not be remembered? I do not speak on any one's behalf but my own, when I tell you to leave. Do me this kindness—grant me this favor; let me, for this also, be indebted to one of your name."

"It is for your sake, then, madame?"

"For mine alone."

"No one whom I shall leave behind me will venture to mock,—no prince even who shall say, 'I required it.'"

"Listen to me, duke," and hereupon the dignified features of the queen assumed a solemn expression. "I swear to you that no one commands in this matter but myself. I swear to you that, not only shall no one either laugh or boast in any way, but no one even shall fail in the respect due to your rank. Rely upon me, duke, as I rely upon you."

"You do not explain yourself, madame; my heart is full of bitterness, and I am in utter despair; no consolation, however gentle and affectionate, can afford me relief."

"Do you remember your mother, duke?" replied the queen, with a winning smile.

"Very slightly, madame; yet I remember how she used to cover me with her caresses and her tears whenever I wept."

"Villiers," murmured the queen, passing her arm round the young man's neck, "look upon me as your mother, and believe that no one shall ever make my son weep."

"I thank you, madame," said the young man, affected and almost suffocated by his emotion; "I feel there is indeed still room in my heart for a gentler and nobler sentiment than love."

The queen-mother looked at him and pressed his hand. "Go," she said.

"When must I leave? Command me."

"At any time that may suit you, my lord," resumed the queen; "you will choose your own day of departure. Instead, however, of setting off to-day, as you would doubtless wish to do, or to-morrow, as others may have expected, leave the day after to-morrow, in the evening; but announce to-day that it is your wish to leave."

"My wish?" murmured the young duke.

"Yes, duke."

"And shall I never return to France?"

Anne of Austria reflected for a moment, seemingly absorbed in sad and serious thought. "It would be a consolation for me," she said, "if you were to return on the day when I shall be carried to my final resting-place at Saint-Denis beside the king, my husband."

"Madame, you are goodness itself; the tide of prosperity is setting in on you; your cup brims over with happiness, and many long years are yet before you."

"In that case you will not come for some time, then," said the queen, endeavoring to smile.

"I shall not return," said Buckingham, "young as I am. Death does not reckon by years; it is impartial; some die young, some reach old age."

"I will not harbor any sorrowful ideas, duke. Let me comfort you; return in two years. I perceive from your face that the very idea which saddens you so much now, will have disappeared before six months have passed, and will be not only dead but forgotten in the period of absence I have assigned you."

"I think you judged me better a little while ago, madame," replied the young man, "when you said that time is powerless against members of the family of Buckingham."

"Silence," said the queen, kissing the duke upon the forehead with an affection she could not restrain. "Go, go; spare me and forget yourself no longer. I am the queen; you are the subject of the king of England; King Charles awaits your return. Adieu, Villiers,—farewell."

"Forever!" replied the young man, and he fled, endeavoring to master his emotion.

Anne leaned her head upon her hands, and then looking at herself in the glass, murmured, "It has been truly said, that a woman who has truly loved is always young, and that the bloom of twenty years ever lies concealed in some secret cloister of the heart."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

KING LOUIS XIV. DOES NOT THINK MADEMOISELLE DE LA VAL-
LIERE EITHER RICH ENOUGH OR PRETTY ENOUGH FOR A
GENTLEMAN OF THE RANK OF THE VICOMTE DE BRAGE-
LONNE.

RAOUL and the Comte de la Fère reached Paris the evening of the same day on which Buckingham had held the conversation with the queen-mother. The count had

scarcely arrived, when, through Raoul, he solicited an audience of the king. His majesty had passed a portion of the morning in looking over, with madame and the ladies of the court, various goods of Lyons manufacture, of which he had made his sister-in-law a present. A court dinner had succeeded, then cards, and afterwards, according to his usual custom, the king, leaving the card-tables at eight o'clock, passed into his cabinet in order to work with M. Colbert and M. Fouquet. Raoul entered the antechamber at the very moment the two ministers quitted it, and the king, perceiving him through the half-closed door, said, "What do you want, M. de Bragelonne?"

The young man approached: "An audience, sire," he replied, "for the Comte de la Fère, who had just arrived from Blois, and is most anxious to have an interview with your majesty."

"I have an hour to spare between cards and supper," said the king. "Is the Comte de la Fère at hand?"

"He is below, and awaits your majesty's permission."

"Let him come up at once," said the king, and five minutes afterwards Athos entered the presence of Louis XIV. He was received by the king with that gracious kindness of manner which Louis, with a tact beyond his years, reserved for the purpose of gaining those who were not to be conquered by ordinary favors. Let me hope, comte," said the king, "that you have come to ask me for something."

"I will not conceal from your majesty," replied the comte, "that I am indeed come for that purpose."

"That is well," said the king, joyously.

"It is not for myself, sire."

"So much the worse; but, at least, I will do for your *protégé* what you refuse to permit me to do for you."

"Your majesty encourages me. I have come to speak on behalf of the Vicomte de Bragelonne."

"It is the same as if you spoke on your own behalf, comte."

"Not altogether so, sire. I am desirous of obtaining from your majesty that which I cannot ask for myself. The vicomte thinks of marrying."

"He is still very young: but that does not matter. He is an eminently distinguished man: I will choose a wife for him."

"He has already chosen one, sire, and only awaits your consent."

"It is only a question, then, of signing the marriage contract?" Athos bowed. "Has he chosen a wife whose fortune and position accord with your own anticipations?"

Athos hesitated for a moment. "His affianced wife is of good birth, but has no fortune."

"That is a misfortune we can remedy."

"You overwhelm me with gratitude, sire; but your majesty will permit me to offer a remark."

"Do so, comte."

"Your majesty seems to intimate an intention of giving a marriage-portion to this young lady."

"Certainly."

"I should regret, sire, if the step I have taken towards your majesty should be attended by this result."

"No false delicacy, comte; what is the bride's name?"

"Mademoiselle La Baume le Blanc de la Vallière," said Athos, coldly.

"I seem to know that name," said the king, as if reflecting; "there was a Marquis de la Vallière."

"Yes, sire, it is his daughter."

"But he died, and his widow married again M. de St. Remy, I think, steward of the dowager madame's household."

"Your Majesty is correctly informed."

"More than that, the young lady has lately become one of the princess's maids of honor."

"Your majesty is better acquainted with her history than I am."

The king again reflected, and glancing at the comte's anxious countenance, said: "The young lady does not seem to me to be very pretty, comte."

"I am not quite sure," replied Athos.

"I have seen her, but she hardly struck me as being so."

"She seems to be a good and modest girl, but has little beauty, sire."

"Beautiful fair hair, however."

"I think so."

"And her blue eyes are tolerably good."

"Yes, sire,"

"With regard to beauty, then, the match is but an ordinary one. Now for the money side of the question."

"Fifteen to twenty thousand francs dowry at the very outside, sire; the lovers are disinterested enough; for myself, I care little for money."

"For superfluity, you mean; but a needful amount is of importance. With fifteen thousand francs, without landed property, a woman cannot live at court. We will make up the deficiency; I will do it for De Bragelonne." The king again remarked the coldness with which Athos received the remark.

"Let us pass from the question of money to that of rank," said Louis XIV.; "the daughter of the Marquis de la Vallière, that is well enough; but there is that excellent St. Remy, who somewhat damages the credit of the family; and you, comte, are rather particular, I believe, about your own family."

"Sire, I no longer hold to anything but my devotion to your majesty."

The king again paused. "A moment, comte. You have surprised me in no little degree from the beginning of your conversation. You came to ask me to authorize a marriage, and you seem greatly disturbed in having to make the request. Nay, pardon me, comte, but I am rarely deceived, young as I am ; for while with some persons I place my friendship at the disposal of my understanding, with others I call my distrust to my aid, by which my discernment is increased. I repeat, that you do not prefer your request as though you wished it success."

"Well, sire, that is true."

"I do not understand you, then ; refuse."

"Nay, sire ; I love De Bragelonne with my whole heart ; he is smitten with Mademoiselle de la Vallière, he weaves dreams of bliss for the future ; I am not one who is willing to destroy the illusions of youth. This marriage is objectionable to me, but I implore your majesty to consent to it forthwith, and thus make Raoul happy."

"Tell me, comte, is she in love with him ?"

"If your majesty requires me to speak candidly, I do not believe in Mademoiselle de la Vallière's affection ; the delight at being at court, the honor of being in the service of Madame, counteract in her head whatever affection she may happen to have in her heart ; it is a marriage similar to many others which already exist at court ; but De Bragelonne wishes it, and so let it be."

"And yet you do not resemble those easy-tempered fathers who volunteer as stepping-stones for their children," said the king.

"I am determined enough against the viciously disposed, but not so against men of upright character. Raoul is suffering ; he is in great distress of mind ; his disposition, naturally light and cheerful, has become gloomy and melancholy. I do not wish to deprive your majesty of the services he may be able to render."

"I understand you," said the king; "and what is more, I understand your heart, too, comte."

"There is no occasion, therefore," replied the comte, "to tell your majesty that my object is to make these children, or rather Raoul, happy."

"And I, too, as much as yourself, comte, wish to secure M. de Bragelonne's happiness."

"I only await your majesty's signature. Raoul will have the honor of presenting himself before your majesty to receive your consent."

"You are mistaken, comte," said the king, firmly; "I have just said that I desire to secure M. de Bragelonne's happiness, and from the present moment, therefore, I oppose his marriage."

"But, sire," exclaimed Athos, "your majesty has promised!"

"Not so, comte, I did not promise you, for it is opposed to my own views."

"I appreciate your majesty's considerate and generous intentions in my behalf; but I take the liberty of recalling to you that I undertook to approach you as an ambassador."

"An ambassador, comte, frequently asks, but does not always obtain what he asks."

"But, sire, it will be such a blow for De Bragelonne."

"My hand shall deal the blow; I will speak to the vicomte."

"Love, sir, is overwhelming in its might."

"Love can be resisted, comte. I myself can assure you of that."

"When one has the soul of a king,—your own, for instance, sire."

"Do not make yourself uneasy on the subject. I have certain views for De Bragelonne. I do not say that he shall not marry Mademoiselle de la Vallière, but I do not

wish him to marry so young; I do not wish him to marry her until she has acquired a fortune; and he, on his side, no less deserves favor, such as I wish to confer upon him. In a word, comte, I wish them to wait."

"Yet once more, sire."

"Comte, you told me you came to request a favor."

"Assuredly, sire."

"Grant me one, then, instead; let us speak no longer upon this matter. It is probable that, before long, war may be declared. I require men about me who are unfettered. I should hesitate to send under fire a married man, or a father of a family. I should hesitate also, on De Bragelonne's account, to endow with a fortune, without some sound reason for it, a young girl, a perfect stranger; such an act would sow jealousy amongst my nobility." Athos bowed, and remained silent.

"Is that all you wished to ask me?" added Louis XIV.

"Absolutely all, sire; and I take my leave of your majesty. Is it, however, necessary that I should inform Raoul?"

"Spare yourself the trouble and annoyance. Tell the vicomte that at my *levée* to-morrow morning I will speak to him. I shall expect you this evening, comte, to join my card-table."

"I am in traveling-costume, sire."

"A day will come, I hope, when you will leave me no more. Before long, comte, the monarchy will be established in such a manner as to enable me to offer a worthy hospitality to men of your merit."

"Provided, sire, a monarch reigns grandly in the hearts of his subjects, the palace he inhabits matters little, since he is worshipped in a temple." With these words Athos left the cabinet, and found De Bragelonne, who was awaiting him anxiously.

"Well, monsieur?" said the young man.

"The king, Raoul, is well intentioned towards us both ; not, perhaps, in the sense you suppose, but he is kind, and generously disposed to our house."

"You have bad news to communicate to me, monsieur," said the young man, turning very pale.

"The king will himself inform you to-morrow morning that it is not bad news."

"The king has not signed, however?"

"The king wishes himself to settle the terms of the contract, and he desires to make it so grand that he requires time for consideration. Throw the blame rather on your own impatience, than on the king's good feeling towards you."

Raoul, in utter consternation, on account of his knowledge of the count's frankness as well as his diplomacy, remained plunged in dull and gloomy stupor.

"Will you not go with me to my lodgings?" said Athos.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur ; I will follow you," he stammered out, following Athos down the staircase.

"Since I am here," said Athos, suddenly, "cannot I see M. d'Artagnan!"

"Shall I show you his apartments?" said De Bragelonne.

"Do so."

"They are on the opposite staircase."

They altered their course, but on reaching the landing of the grand staircase, Raoul perceived a servant in the Comte de Guiche's livery, who ran towards him as soon as he heard his voice.

"What is it?" said Raoul.

"This note, monsieur. My master heard of your return and wrote to you without delay ; I have been looking for you for the last half-hour."

Raoul approached Athos as he unsealed the letter, saying, "With your permission, monsieur."

"Certainly."

"Dear Raoul," wrote the Comte de Guiche, "I have an affair in hand which requires immediate attention; I know you have returned; come to me as soon as possible."

Hardly had he finished reading it, when a servant in the livery of the Duke of Buckingham, turning out of the gallery, recognized Raoul, and approached him respectfully, saying, "From his grace, monsieur."

"Well, Raoul, as I see you are already as busy as a general of an army, I shall leave you, and will find M. d'Artagnan myself."

"You will excuse me, I trust," said Raoul.

"Yes, yes, I excuse you; adieu, Raoul; you will find me at my apartments until to-morrow; during the day I may set out for Blois, unless I have orders to the contrary."

"I shall present my respects to you to-morrow, monsieur."

As soon as Athos had left, Raoul opened Buckingham's letter.

"Monsieur de Bragelonne," it ran, "You are, of all the Frenchmen I have known, the one with whom I am most pleased; I am about to put your friendship to the proof. I have received a certain message, written in very good French. As I am an Englishman, I am afraid of not comprehending it very clearly. The letter has a good name attached to it, and that is all I can tell you. Will you be good enough to come and see me; for I am told you have arrived from Blois."

"Your devoted

"VILLIERS, Duke of Buckingham."

"I am going now to see your master," said Raoul to De Guiche's servant as he dismissed him; "and I shall be with the Duke of Buckingham in an hour," he added, dismissing with these words the duke's messenger.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SWORD-THRUSTS IN THE WATER.

RAOUL, on betaking himself to De Guiche, found him conversing with De Wardes and Manicamp. De Wardes, since the affair of the barricade, had treated Raoul as a stranger; they behaved as if they were not acquainted. As Raoul entered, De Guiche walked up to him; and Raoul, as he grasped his friend's hand, glanced rapidly at his two companions, hoping to be able to read on their faces what was passing in their minds. De Wardes was cold and impenetrable; Manicamp seemed absorbed in the contemplation of some trimming to his dress. De Guiche led Raoul to an adjoining cabinet, and made him sit down, saying, "How well you look!"

"That is singular," replied Raoul, "for I am far from being in good spirits."

"It is your case, then, Raoul, as it is my own,—our love affairs do not progress."

"So much the better, count, as far as *you* are concerned; the worst news would be good news."

"In that case do not distress yourself, for, not only am I very unhappy, but, what is more, I see others about me who are happy."

"Really, I do not understand you," replied Raoul; "explain yourself."

"You will soon learn. I have tried, but in vain, to overcome the feeling you saw dawn in me, increase and take entire possession of me. I have summoned all your advice and my own strength to my aid. I have well

weighed the unfortunate affair in which I have embarked; I have sounded its depths; that it is an abyss, I am aware, but it matters little, for *I* shall pursue my own course."

"This is madness, De Guiche! you cannot advance another step without risking your own ruin to-day, perhaps your life to-morrow."

"Whatever may happen, I have done with reflections: listen."

"And you hope to succeed; you believe that Madame will love you?"

"Raoul, I believe nothing; I hope, because hope exists in man and never abandons him till death."

"But, admitting that you obtain the happiness you covet, even then, you are more certainly lost than if you had failed in obtaining it."

"I beseech you, Raoul, not to interrupt me any more; you could never convince me, for I tell you beforehand, I do not wish to be convinced; I have gone so far I cannot recede; I have suffered so much, death itself would be a boon. I no longer love to madness, Raoul, I am being engulfed by a whirlpool of jealousy."

Raoul struck his hands together with an expression resembling anger. "Well?" said he.

"Well or ill, matters little. This is what I claim from you, my friend, my almost brother. During the last three days Madame has been living in a perfect intoxication of gayety. On the first day, I dared not look at her; I hated her for not being as unhappy as myself. The next day I could not bear her out of my sight; and she, Raoul—at least I thought I remarked it—she looked at me, if not with pity, at least with gentleness. But between her looks and mine, a shadow intervened: another's smile invited hers. Beside her horse another's always gallops, which is not mine; in her ear another's caressing voice, not mine, unceasingly vibrates. Raoul, for three days

past my brain has been on fire; flame, not blood, courses through my veins. That shadow must be driven away, that smile must be quenched; that voice must be silenced.

"You wish Monsieur's death," exclaimed Raoul.

"No, no, I am not jealous of the husband; I am jealous of the lover."

"Of the *lover*?" said Raoul.

"Have you not observed it, you who were formerly so keen-sighted?"

"Are you jealous of the Duke of Buckingham?"

"To the very death."

"Again jealous?"

"This time the affair will be easy to arrange between us; I have taken the initiative, and have sent him a letter."

"It was you, then, who wrote to him?"

"How do you know that?"

"I know it, because he told me so. Look at this;" and he handed De Guiche the letter he had received nearly at the same moment as his own. De Guiche read it eagerly, and said, "He is a brave man, and more than that, a gallant man."

"Most certainly the duke is a gallant man; I need not ask if you wrote to him in a similar style."

"He will show you my letter when you call on him on my behalf."

"But that is almost out of the question."

"What is?"

"That I shall call on him for that purpose."

"Why so?"

"The duke consults me as you do."

"I suppose you will give *me* the preference! Listen to me, Raoul, I wish you to tell his grace—it is a very simple matter—that to-day, to-morrow, the following day, or any other day he may choose, I will meet him at Vincennes."

"Reflect, De Guiche."

"I thought I told you I have reflected."

"The duke is a stranger here; he is on a mission which renders his person inviolable. . . . Vincennes is close to the Bastile."

"The consequences concern *me*."

"But the motive for this meeting? What motive do you wish me to assign?"

"Be perfectly easy on that score, he will not ask any. The duke must be as sick of me as I am of him. I implore you, therefore, seek the duke, and if it is necessary to entreat him to accept my offer, I will do so."

"That is useless. The duke has already informed me that he wishes to speak to me. The duke is now playing cards with the kirg. Let us both go there. I will draw him aside in the gallery; you will remain aloof. Two words will be sufficient."

"That is well arranged. I will take De Wardes to keep me in countenance."

"Why not Manicamp? De Wardes can join us at any time; we can leave him here."

"Yes, that is true."

"He knows nothing?"

"Positively nothing. You continue still on an unfriendly footing, then?"

"Has he not told you anything?"

"Nothing."

"I do not like the man, and, as I *never* liked him, the result is, that I am on no worse terms with him to-day than I was yesterday."

"Let us go, then."

The four descended the stairs. De Guiche's carriage was waiting at the door, and took them to the Palais-Royal. As they were going along, Raoul was engaged in devising his scheme of action. The sole depositary of two secrets,

he did not despair of concluding some arrangement between the two parties. He knew the influence he exercised over Buckingham, and the ascendancy he had acquired over De Guiche, and affairs did not look utterly hopeless. On their arrival in the gallery, dazzling with the blaze of light, where the most beautiful and illustrious women of the court moved to and fro, like stars in their own atmosphere, Raoul could not prevent himself for a moment forgetting De Guiche in order to seek out Louise, who, amidst her companions, like a dove completely fascinated, gazed long and fixedly upon the royal circle, which glittered with jewels and gold. All its members were standing, the king alone being seated. Raoul perceived Buckingham, who was standing a few paces from Monsieur, in a group of French and English, who were admiring his aristocratic carriage and the incomparable magnificence of his costume. Some of the older courtiers remembered having seen his father, but their recollections were not prejudicial to the son.

Buckingham was conversing with Fouquet, who was talking with him aloud about Belle-Isle, "I cannot speak to him at present," said Raoul.

"Wait, then, and choose your opportunity, but finish everything speedily. I am on thorns."

"See, our deliverer approaches," said Raoul, perceiving D'Artagnan, who, magnificently dressed in his new uniform of captain of the musketeers, had just made his entry in the gallery; and he advanced towards D'Artagnan.

"The Comte de la Fère has been looking for you, chevalier," said Raoul.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan, "I have just left him."

"I thought you would have passed a portion of the evening together."

"We have arranged to meet again."

As he answered Raoul, his absent looks were directed on all sides, as if seeking some one in the crowd or looking for something in the room. Suddenly his gaze became fixed, like that of an eagle on its prey. Raoul followed the direction of his glance, and noticed that De Guiche and D'Artagnan saluted each other, but he could not distinguish at whom the captain's inquiring and haughty glance was aimed.

"Chevalier," said Raoul, "there is no one here but yourself who can render me a service."

"What is it, my dear vicomte?"

"It is simply to go and interrupt the Duke of Buckingham, to whom I wish to say two words, and, as the duke is conversing with M. Fouquet, you understand that it would not do for *me* to throw myself into the middle of the conversation."

"Ah, ah, is M. Fouquet there?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"Do you not see him?"

"Yes, now I do. But do you think I have a greater right than you have?"

"You are a more important personage."

"Yes, you're right; I am captain of the musketeers; I have had the post promised me so long, and have enjoyed it for so brief a period, that I am always forgetting my dignity."

"You will do me this service, will you not?"

"M. Fouquet—the deuce!"

"Are you not on good terms with him?"

"It is rather he who may not be on good terms with me; however, since it must be done some day or another——"

"Stay; I think he is looking at you; or is it likely that it might be——"

"No, no; don't deceive yourself, it is indeed me for whom this honor is intended."

"The opportunity is a good one, then."

"Do you think so?"

"Pray go."

"Well, I will."

De Guiche had not removed his eyes from Raoul, who made a sign to him that all was arranged. D'Artagnan walked straight up to the group, and civilly saluted M. Fouquet as well as the others.

"Good evening, M. d'Artagnan; we were speaking of Belle-Isle," said Fouquet, with that usage of society, and that perfect knowledge of the language of looks, which require half a lifetime thoroughly to acquire, and which some persons, notwithstanding all their study, never attain.

"Of Belle-Isle-en-Mer! Ah!" said D'Artagnan. "It belongs to you, I believe, M. Fouquet?"

"M. Fouquet has just told me that he had presented it to the king," said Buckingham.

"Do you know Belle-Isle, chevalier?" inquired Fouquet.

"I have only been there once," replied D'Artagnan, with readiness and good-humor.

"Did you remain there long?"

"Scarcely a day."

"Did you see much of it while you were there?"

"All that could be seen in a day."

"A great deal can be seen with observation as keen as yours," said Fouquet; at which D'Artagnan bowed.

During this Raoul made a sign to Buckingham. "M. Fouquet," said Buckingham, "I leave the captain with you, he is more learned than I am in bastions, scarps, and counter-scarps, and I will join one of my friends, who has just beckoned me." Saying this, Buckingham disengaged himself from the group, and advanced towards Raoul, stopping for a moment at the table where the

queen-mother, the young queen, and the king were playing together.

"Now, Raoul," said De Guiche, "there he is; be firm and quick."

Buckingham, having made some complimentary remark to Madame, continued his way towards Raoul, who advanced to meet him, while De Guiche remained in his place, though he followed him with his eyes. The maneuver was so arranged that the young men met in an open space which was left vacant, between the group of players and the gallery, where they walked, stopping now and then for the purpose of saying a few words to some of the graver courtiers who were walking there. At the moment when the two lines were about to unite, they were broken by a third. It was Monsieur who advanced toward the Duke of Buckingham. Monsieur had his most engaging smile on his red and perfumed lips.

"My dear duke," said he, with the most affectionate politeness; "is it really true what I have just been told?"

Buckingham turned round; he had not noticed Monsieur approach, but had merely heard his voice. He started in spite of his command over himself, and a slight pallor overspread his face. "Monseigneur," he asked, "what has been told you that surprises you so much?"

"That which throws me into despair, and will, in truth, be a real cause of mourning for the whole court."

"Your highness is very kind, for I perceive that you allude to my departure."

"Precisely."

Guiche had overheard the conversation from where he was standing, and started in his turn. "His departure," he murmured. "What does he say?"

Philip continued with the same gracious air, "I can easily conceive, monsieur, why the king of Great Britain

recalls you ; we all know that King Charles II., who appreciates true gentlemen, cannot dispense with you. But it cannot be supposed we can let you go without great regret ; and I beg you to receive the expression of my own."

"Believe me, monseigneur," said the duke, "that if I quit the court of France——"

"Because you are recalled ; but, if you suppose the expression of my own wish on the subject might possibly have any influence with the king, I will gladly volunteer to entreat his majesty Charles II. to leave you with us a little while longer."

"I am overwhelmed, monseigneur, by so much kindness," replied Buckingham ; "but I have received positive commands. My residence in France was limited ; I have prolonged it at the risk of displeasing my gracious sovereign. It is only this very day that I recollected I ought to have set off four days ago."

"Indeed," said Monsieur.

"Yes ; but," added Buckingham, raising his voice in such a manner that the princess could hear him,—“but I resemble that dweller in the East, who turned mad, and remained so for several days, owing to a delightful dream that he had had, but who one day awoke, if not completely cured, in some respects rational at least. The court of France has its intoxicating properties, which are not unlike this dream, my lord ; but at last I wake and leave it. I shall be unable, therefore, to prolong my residence, as your highness has so kindly invited me to do."

"When do you leave?" inquired Philip, with an expression full of interest.

"To-morrow, monseigneur. My carriages have been ready for three days."

The Duc d'Orléans made a movement of the head,

which seemed to signify, "Since you are determined, duke, there is nothing to be said." Buckingham returned the gesture, concealing under a smile a contraction of his heart; and then Monsieur moved away in the same direction by which he had approached. At the same moment, however, De Guiche advanced from the opposite direction. Raoul feared that the impatient young man might possibly make the proposition himself, and hurried forward before him.

"No, no, Raoul, all is useless now," said Guiche, holding both his hands toward the duke, and leading him behind a column. "Forgive me, duke, for what I wrote to you, I was mad; give me back my letter."

"It is true," said the duke, "you cannot owe me a grudge any longer now."

"Forgive me, duke; my friendship, my lasting friendship is yours."

"There is certainly no reason why you should bear me any ill-will from the moment I leave her never to see her again."

Raoul heard these words, and comprehending that his presence was now useless between the two young men, who had now only friendly words to exchange, withdrew a few paces; a movement which brought him closer to De Wardes, who was conversing with the Chevalier de Lorraine respecting the departure of Buckingham. "A strategic retreat," said De Wardes.

"Why so?"

"Because the dear duke saves a sword thrust by it." At which reply both laughed.

Raoul, indignant, turned round frowningly, flushed with anger and his lip curling with disdain. The Chevalier de Lorraine turned on his heel, but De Wardes remained and waited.

"You will not break yourself of the habit," said Raoul

his visitors with all the courtesy he was capable of ; he preserved his unmoved and unconcerned look. All the persons present were men of distinction, occupying posts of honor and credit at the court. After he had apologized to each of them for any inconvenience he might have put them to, he turned towards De Wardes, who, in spite of his customary self-command, could not prevent his face betraying some surprise mingled with not a little uneasiness.

"Now, monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "since we are no longer within the precincts of the king's palace, and since we can speak out without failing in respect to propriety, I will inform you why I have taken the liberty to request you to visit me here, and why I have invited these gentlemen to be present at the same time. My friend, the Comte de la Fère has acquainted me with the injurious reports you are spreading about myself. You have stated that you regard me as your mortal enemy, because I was, so you affirm, that of your father."

"Perfectly true, monsieur, I have said so," replied De Wardes, whose pallid face became slightly tinged with color.

"You accuse me, therefore, of a crime, or a fault, or of some mean and cowardly act. Have the goodness to state your charge against me in precise terms."

"In the presence of witnesses?"

"Most certainly in the presence of witnesses ; and you see I have selected them as being experienced in affairs of honor."

"You do not appreciate my delicacy, monsieur. I have accused you, it is true ; but I have kept the nature of the accusation a perfect secret. I entered into no details ; but have rested satisfied by expressing my hatred in the presence of those on whom a duty was almost imposed to acquaint you with it. You have not taken the dis-

creeptness I have shown into consideration, although you were interested in remaining silent. I can hardly recognize your habitual prudence in that, M. d'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan, who was quietly biting the corner of his mustache, said, "I have already had the honor to beg you to state the particulars of the grievances you say you have against me."

"Aloud?"

"Certainly, aloud."

"In that case, I will speak."

"Speak, monsieur," said D'Artagnan, bowing; "we are all listening to you."

"Well, monsieur, it is not a question of a personal injury towards myself, but one towards my father."

"That you have already stated."

"Yes; but there are certain subjects which are only approached with hesitation."

"If that hesitation, in your case, really does exist, I entreat you to overcome it."

"Even if it refer to a disgraceful action?"

"Yes; in every and any case."

Those who were present at this scene had, at first, looked at each other with a good deal of uneasiness. They were reassured, however, when they saw that D'Artagnan manifested no emotion whatever.

De Wardes still maintained the same unbroken silence. "Speak, monsieur," said the musketeer; "you see you are keeping us waiting."

"Listen, then:—My father loved a lady of noble birth, and this lady loved my father." D'Artagnan and Athos exchanged looks. De Wardes continued: "M. d'Artagnan found some letters which indicated a rendezvous, substituted himself, under disguise, for the person who was expected, and took advantage of the darkness."

"That is perfectly true," said D'Artagnan.

A slight murmur was heard from those present. "Yes, I was guilty of that dishonorable action. You should have added, monsieur, since you are so impartial, that, at the period when the circumstance which you have just related, happened, I was not one-and-twenty years of age."

"Such an action is not the less shameful on that account," said De Wardes; "and it is quite sufficient for a gentleman to have attained the age of reason, to avoid committing an act of indelicacy."

A renewed murmur was heard, but this time of astonishment, and almost of doubt.

"It was a most shameful deception, I admit," said D'Artagnan, "and I have not waited for M. de Wardes' reproaches to reproach myself for it, and very bitterly, too. Age has, however, made me more reasonable, and, above all, more upright; and this injury has been atoned for by a long and lasting regret. But I appeal to you, gentlemen; this affair took place in 1626, at a period, happily for yourselves, known to you by tradition only, at a period when love was not over scrupulous, when consciences did not distill, as in the present day, poison and bitterness. We were young soldiers, always fighting, or being attacked, our swords always in our hands, or at least ready to be drawn from their sheaths. Death then always stared us in the face, war hardened us, and the cardinal pressed us sorely. I have repented of it, and more than that—I still repent it, M. de Wardes."

"I can well understand that, monsieur, for the action itself needed repentance; but you were not the less the cause of that lady's disgrace. She of whom you have been speaking, covered with shame, borne down by the affront you brought upon her, fled, quitted France, and no one ever knew what became of her."

"Stay," said the Comte de la Fère, stretching his hand

towards De Wardes, with a peculiar smile upon his face, "you are mistaken; she was seen: and there are persons even now present, who, having often heard her spoken of, will easily recognize her by the description I am about to give. She was about five-and-twenty years of age, slender in form, of a pale complexion, and fair-haired; she was married in England."

"Married?" exclaimed De Wardes.

"So, you were not aware she was married? You see we are far better informed than yourself. Do you happen to know she was usually styled 'My Lady,' without the addition of any name to that description?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Good heavens!" murmured Buckingham.

"Very well, monsieur. That woman, who came from England, returned to England after having thrice attempted M. d'Artagnan's life. That was but just, you will say, since M. d'Artagnan had insulted her. But that which was not just was, that, when in England, this woman, by her seductions, completely enslaved a young man in the service of Lord de Winter, by name Felton. You change color, my lord," said Athos turning to the Duke of Buckingham, "and your eyes kindle with anger and sorrow. Let your grace finish the recital, then, and tell M. de Wardes who this woman was who placed the knife in the hand of your father's murderer."

A cry escaped from the lips of all present. The young duke passed his handkerchief across his forehead, which was covered with perspiration. A dead silence ensued among the spectators.

"You see, M. de Wardes," said D'Artagnan, whom this recital had impressed more and more, as his own recollection revived as Athos spoke, "you see that my crime did not cause the destruction of any one's soul, and that the soul in question may fairly be considered to have

been altogether lost before my regret. It is, however, an act of conscience on my part. Now this matter is settled, therefore, it remains for me to ask, with the greatest humility, your forgiveness for this shameless action, as most certainly I should have asked it of your father, if he were still alive, and if I had met him after my return to France, subsequent to the death of King Charles I."

"That is too much, M d'Artagnan," exclaimed many voices, with animation.

"No, gentlemen," said the captain. "And now, M. de Wardes, I hope all is finished between us, and that you will have no further occasion to speak ill of me again. Do you consider it completely settled?"

De Wardes bowed, and muttered to himself inarticulately.

"I trust also," said D'Artagnan, approaching the young man closely, "that you will no longer speak ill of any one, as it seems you have the unfortunate habit of doing; for a man so puritanically conscientious as you are, who can reproach an old soldier for a youthful freak five-and-thirty years after it happened, will allow me to ask whether you, who advocate such excessive purity of conscience, will undertake on your side to do nothing contrary either to conscience or the principle of honor. And now, listen attentively to what I am going to say, M. de Wardes, in conclusion. Take care that no tale, with which your name may be associated, reaches my ear."

"Monsieur," said De Wardes, "it is useless threatening to no purpose."

"I have not yet finished, M. de Wardes; and you must listen to me still further." The circle of listeners, full of eager curiosity, drew closer. "You spoke just now of the honor of a woman, and of the honor of your father. We were glad to hear you speak in that manner; for it is pleasing to think that such a sentiment of delicacy and

rectitude, and which did not exist, it seems, in *our* minds, lives in our children; and it is delightful too, to see a young man, at an age when men from habit become the destroyers of the honor of women, respect and defend it."

De Wardes bit his lips and clenched his hands, evidently much disturbed to learn how this discourse, the commencement of which was announced in so threatening a manner, would terminate.

"How did it happen, then, that you allowed yourself to say to M. Bragelonne that he did not know who his mother was?"

Raoul's eye flashed, as, darting forward, he exclaimed,—"Chevalier, this is a personal affair of my own!" At which exclamation, a smile, full of malice, passed across De Wardes' face.

D'Artagnan put Raoul aside, saying,—“Do not interrupt me, young man.” And looking at De Wardes in an authoritative manner, he continued:—“I am now dealing with a matter which cannot be settled by means of the sword. I discuss it before men of honor, all of whom have more than once had their swords in their hands in affairs of honor. I selected them expressly. These gentlemen well know that every secret for which men fight ceases to be a secret. I again put my question to M. de Wardes. What was the subject of conversation when you offended this young man, in offending his father and mother at the same time?”

“It seems to me,” returned De Wardes, “that liberty of speech is allowed, when it is supported by every means which a man of courage has at his disposal.”

“Tell me what the means are by which a man of courage can sustain a slanderous expression.”

“The sword.”

“You fail, not only in logic, in your argument, but in religion and honor. You expose the lives of many others,

without referring to your own, which seems to be full of hazard. Besides, fashions pass away, monsieur, and the fashion of dueling has passed away, without referring in any way to the edicts of his majesty which forbid it. Therefore, in order to be consistent with your own chivalrous notions, you will at once apologize to M. de Bragelonne; you will tell him how much you regret having spoken so lightly, and that the nobility and purity of his race are inscribed, not in his heart alone, but still more, in every action of his life. You will do and say this, M. de Wardes, as I, an old officer, did and said just now to your boy's mustache."

"And if I refuse?" inquired De Wardes.

"In that case the result will be——"

"That which you think you will prevent," said De Wardes, laughing; "the result will be that your conciliatory address will end in a violation of the king's prohibition."

"Not so," said the captain, "you are quite mistaken."

"What will be the result, then?"

"The result will be, that I shall go to the king, with whom I am on tolerably good terms, to whom I have been happy enough to render certain services, dating from a period when you were not born, and who, at my request, has just sent me an order in blank for M. Baisemeaux de Montlezun, governor of the Bastile; and I shall say to the king,—‘Sire, a man has in a most cowardly way insulted M. de Bragelonne by insulting his mother; I have written this man's name upon the *lettre de cachet* which your majesty has been kind enough to give me, so that M. De Wardes is in the Bastile for three years.’" And D'Artagnan, drawing the order signed by the king from his pocket, held it towards De Wardes.

Remarking that the young man was not quite convinced, and received the warning as an idle threat, he

shrugged his shoulders, and walked leisurely towards the table, upon which lay a writing-case and a pen, the length of which would have terrified the topographical Porthos. De Wardes then saw that nothing could well be more seriously intended than the threat in question, for the Bastile, even at that period, was already held in dread. He advanced a step towards Raoul, and, in an almost unintelligible voice, said,—“I offer my apologies in the terms which M. d’Artagnan just now dictated, and which I am forced to make to you.”

“One moment, monsieur,” said the musketeer, with the greatest tranquillity, “you mistake the terms of the apology. I did not say, ‘and which I am forced to make;’ I said, ‘and which my conscience induces me to make.’ This latter expression, believe me, is better than the former; and it will be far preferable, since it will be the most truthful expression of your own sentiments.”

“I subscribe to it,” said De Wardes; “but submit, gentlemen, that a thrust of a sword through the body, as was the custom formerly, was far better than tyranny like this.”

“No, monsieur,” replied Buckingham; “for the sword thrust, when received, was no indication that a particular person was right or wrong; it only showed that he was more or less skillful in the use of the weapon.”

“Monsieur!” exclaimed De Wardes.

“There now,” interrupted D’Artagnan, “you are going to say something very rude, and I am rendering you a service by stopping you in time.”

“Is that all, monsieur?” inquired De Wardes.

“Absolutely everything,” replied D’Artagnan; “and these gentlemen, as well as myself, are quite satisfied with you.”

“Believe me, monsieur, that your reconciliations are not successful.”

"In what way?"

"Because, as we are now about to separate, I would wager that M. de Bragelonne and myself are greater enemies than ever."

"You are deceived, monsieur, as far as I am concerned," returned Raoul; "for I do not retain the slightest animosity in my heart against you."

This last blow overwhelmed De Wardes. He cast his eyes around him like a man bewildered. D'Artagnan saluted most courteously the gentlemen who had been present at the explanation; and every one, on leaving the room, shook hands with him; but not one hand was held out towards De Wardes. "Oh!" exclaimed the young man, abandoning himself to the rage which consumed him, "can I not find some one on whom to wreak my vengeance?"

"You can, monsieur, for I am here," whispered a voice full of menace in his ear.

De Wardes turned round, and saw the Duke of Buckingham, who, having probably remained behind with that intention, had just approached him. "You, monsieur?" exclaimed De Wardes.

"Yes, I! I am no subject of the king of France; I am not going to remain on the territory, since I am about setting off for England. I have accumulated in my heart such a mass of despair and rage, that I, too, like yourself, need to revenge myself upon some one. I approve M. d'Artagnan's principles profoundly, but I am not bound to apply them to you. I am an Englishman, and, in my turn, I propose to you what you proposed to others to no purpose. Since you, therefore, are so terribly incensed, take me as a remedy. In thirty-four hours' time I shall be at Calais. Come with me; the journey will appear shorter if together, than if alone. We will fight, when we get there, upon the sands which are covered by the

rising tide, and which form part of the French territory during six hours of the day, but belong to the territory of Heaven during the other six."

"I accept willingly," said De Wardes.

"I assure you," said the duke, "that if you kill me, you will be rendering me an infinite service."

"I will do my utmost to make myself agreeable to you, duke," said De Wardes.

"It is agreed, then, that I carry you off with me?"

"I shall be at your commands. I needed some real danger and some mortal risk to run, to tranquilize me."

"In that case, I think you have met with what you are looking for. Farewell, M. de Wardes; to-morrow morning, my valet will tell you the exact hour of our departure; we can travel together like two excellent friends. I generally travel as fast as I can. Adieu."

Buckingham saluted De Wardes, and returned towards the king's apartments: De Wardes, irritated beyond measure, left the Palais-Royal, and hurried through the streets homeward to the house where he lodged.

CHAPTER XL.

BAISEMEAUX DE MONTLEZUN.

AFTER the austere lesson administered to De Wardes, Athos and D'Artagnan together descended the staircase which led to the courtyard of the Palais-Royal. "You perceive," said Athos to D'Artagnan, "that Raoul cannot, sooner or later, avoid a duel with De Wardes, for De Wardes is as brave as he is vicious and wicked."

"I know such fellows well," replied D'Artagnan: "I had an affair with the father. I assure you that, although

at that time I had good muscles and a sort of brute courage—I assure you that the father did me some mischief. But you should have seen how I fought it out with him. Ah, Athos, such encounters never take place in these times! I had a hand which could never remain at rest, a hand like quicksilver,—you knew its quality, for you have seen me at work. My sword was no longer a piece of steel; it was a serpent that assumed every form and every length, seeking where it might thrust its head; in other words, where it might fix its bite. I advanced half a dozen paces, then three, and then, body to body, I pressed my antagonist closely, then I darted back again ten paces. No human power could resist that ferocious ardor. Well, De Wardes, the father, with the bravery of his race, with his dogged courage, occupied a good deal of my time; and my fingers, at the end of the engagement, were, I well remember, tired enough.”

“It is, then, as I said,” resumed Athos, “the son will always be looking out for Raoul, and will end by meeting him; and Raoul can easily be found when he is sought for.”

“Agreed; but Raoul calculates well; he bears no grudge against De Wardes,—he has said so; he will wait until he is provoked, and in that case his position is a good one. The king will not be able to get out of temper about the matter; besides we shall know how to pacify his majesty. But why so full of these fears and anxieties? you don’t easily get alarmed.”

“I will tell you what makes me anxious: Raoul is to see the king to-morrow, when his majesty will inform him of his wishes respecting a certain marriage. Raoul, loving as he does, will get out of temper, and once in an angry mood, if he were to meet De Wardes, the shell would explode.”

“We will prevent the explosion.”

"Not I," said Athos, "for I must return to Blois. All this gilded elegance of the court, all these intrigues, sicken me. I am no longer a young man who can make terms with the meannesses of the day. I have read in the Great Book many things too beautiful and too comprehensive, to longer take any interest in the trifling phrases which these men whisper among themselves when they wish to deceive others. In one word, I am weary of Paris wherever and whenever you are not with me; and as I cannot have you with me always, I wish to return to Blois."

"How wrong you are, Athos; how you gainsay your origin and the destiny of your noble nature. Men of your stamp are created to continue, to the very last moment, in full possession of their great faculties. Look at my sword, a Spanish blade, the one I wore at Rochelle; it served me for thirty years without fail; one day in the winter it fell upon the marble floor on the Louvre and was broken. I had a hunting knife made of it which will last a hundred years yet. You, Athos, with your loyalty, your frankness, your cool courage, and your sound information, are the very man kings need to warn and direct them. Remain here; Monsieur Fouquet will not last as long as my Spanish blade."

"Is it possible," said Athos, smiling, "that my friend D'Artagnan, who, after having raised me to the skies, making me an object of worship, casts me down from the top of Olympus, and hurls me to the ground? I have more exalted ambition, D'Artagnan. To be a minister—to be a slave, never! Am I not still greater? I am nothing. I remember having heard you occasionally call me 'the great Athos;' I defy you, therefore, if I were minister, to continue to bestow that title upon me. No, no; I do not yield myself in this manner."

"We will not speak of it any more, then;—renounce everything, even the brotherly feeling which unites us."

"It is almost cruel what you say."

D'Artagnan pressed Athos's hand warmly. "No, no; renounce everything without fear. Raoul can get on without you. I am at Paris."

"In that case I shall return to Blois. We will take leave of each other to-night; to-morrow at daybreak I shall be on my horse again."

"You cannot return to your hotel alone; why did you not bring Grimaud with you?"

"Grimaud takes his rest now; he goes to bed early, for my poor old servant gets easily fatigued. He came from Blois with me, and I compelled him to remain within doors; for if, in retracing the forty leagues which separate us from Blois, he needed to draw breath even, he would die without a murmur. But I don't want to lose Grimaud."

"You shall have one of my musketeers to carry a torch for you. *Hold!* some one there," called out D'Artagnan, leaning over the gilded balustrade—the heads of seven or eight musketeers appeared—"I wish some gentleman who is so disposed, to escort the Comte de la Fère," cried D'Artagnan.

"Thank you for your readiness, gentlemen," said Athos; "I regret to have occasion to trouble you in this manner."

"I would willingly escort the Comte de la Fère," said some one, "if I had not to speak to Monsieur D'Artagnan."

"Who is that?" said D'Artagnan, looking into the darkness.

"I, Monsieur D'Artagnan."

"Heaven forgive me, if that is not Monsieur Baise-meaux's voice."

"It is, monsieur."

"What are you doing in the courtyard, my dear Baise-meaux?"

"I am waiting your orders, my dear Monsieur D'Artagnan."

"Wretch that I am," thought D'Artagnan; "true, you have been told, I suppose, that some one was to be arrested, and have come yourself, instead of sending an officer?"

"I came because I had occasion to speak to you."

"You did not send to me?"

"I waited until you were disengaged," said Monsieur Baisemeaux, timidly.

"I leave you, D'Artagnan," said Athos.

"Not before I have presented Monsieur Baisemeaux de Montlezun, the governor of the Bastile."

Baisemeaux and Athos saluted each other.

"Surely you must know each other," said D'Artagnan.

"I have an indistinct recollection of Monsieur Baisemeaux," said Athos.

"You remember, my dear Baisemeaux, the king's guardsman with whom we used formerly to have such delightful meetings in the cardinal's time."

"Perfectly," said Athos, taking leave of him with affability.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Fère, whose *nom de guerre* was Athos," whispered D'Artagnan to Baisemeaux.

"Yes, yes, a brave man, one of the celebrated four."

"Precisely so. But, my dear Baisemeaux, shall we talk now?"

"If you please?"

"In the first place, as for the orders—there are none. The king does not intend to arrest the person in question."

"So much the worse," said Baisemeaux with a sigh.

"What do you mean by so much the worse?" exclaimed D'Artagnan, laughing.

"No doubt of it," returned the governor, "my prisoners are my income."

"I beg your pardon, I did not see it in that light."

"And so there are no orders," repeated Baisemeaux with a sigh. "What an admirable situation yours is, captain," he continued, after a pause, "captain-lieutenant of the musketeers."

"Oh, it is good enough; but I don't see why you should envy me; you, governor of the Bastille, the first castle in France."

"I am well aware of that," said Baisemeaux, in a sorrowful tone of voice.

"You say that like a man confessing his sins. I would willingly exchange my profits for yours."

"Don't speak of profits to me if you wish to save me the bitterest anguish of mind."

"Why do you look first on one side and then on the other, as if you were afraid of being arrested yourself, you whose business it is to arrest others?"

"I was looking to see whether any one could see or listen to us; it would be safer to confer more in private, if you would grant me such a favor."

"Baisemeaux, you seem to forget we are acquaintances of five and thirty years standing. Don't assume such sanctified airs; make yourself quite comfortable; I don't eat governors of the Bastille raw."

"Heaven be praised!"

"Come into the courtyard with me; it's a beautiful moonlight night; we will walk up and down, arm in arm, under the trees, while you tell me your pitiful tale." He drew the doleful governor into the courtyard, took him by the arm as he had said, and, in his rough, good-humored way, cried:—"Out with it, rattle away, Baisemeaux; what have you got to say?"

"It's a long story."

"You prefer your own lamentations, then; my opinion is, it will be longer than ever. I'll wager you are

making fifty thousand francs out of your pigeons in the Bastile."

"Would to heaven that were the case, M. D'Artagnan."

"You surprise me, Baisemeaux; just look at you, acting the anchorite. I should like to show you your face in a glass, and you would see how plump and florid-looking you are, as fat and round as a cheese, with eyes like lighted coals; and if it were not for that ugly wrinkle you try to cultivate on your forehead, you would hardly look fifty years old, and you are sixty, if I am not mistaken."

"All quite true."

"Of course I knew it was true, as true as the fifty thousand francs profit you make;" at which remark Baisemeaux stamped on the ground."

"Well, well," said D'Artagnan, "I will add up your accounts for you: you were captain of M. Mazarin's guards; and 12,000 francs a year would in twelve years amount to 140,000 francs."

"Twelve thousand francs! Are you mad!" cried Baisemeaux; "the old miser gave me no more than 6,000, and the expenses of the post amounted to 6,500 francs. M. Colbert, who deducted the other 6,000 francs, condescended to allow me to take fifty pistoles as a gratification; so that, if it were not for my little estate at Montlezun, which brings me in 12,000 francs a year, I could not have met my engagements."

"Well, then, how about the 50,000 francs from the Bastile? There, I trust, you are boarded and lodged, and get your 6,000 francs salary besides."

"Admitted!"

"Whether the year be good or bad, there are fifty prisoners, who, on an average, bring you in a thousand francs a year each."

"I don't deny it."

"Well, there is at once an income of 50,000 francs; you

have held the post three years, and must have received in that time 150,000 francs."

"You forget one circumstance, dear M. D'Artagnan."

"What is that?"

"That while you received your appointment as captain from the king himself, I received mine as governor from Messrs. Tremblay and Louvière."

"Quite right, and Tremblay was not a man to let you have the post for nothing."

"Nor Louvière either: the result was, that I gave 75,000 francs to Tremblay as his share."

"Very agreeable that! and to Louvière?"

"The very same."

"Money down?"

"No: that would have been impossible. The king did not wish, or rather M. Mazarin did not wish, to have the appearance of removing those two gentlemen, who had sprung from the barricades; he permitted them, therefore to make certain extravagant conditions for their retirement."

"What were those conditions?"

"Tremble . . . three years' income for the good-will."

"The deuce! so that the 150,000 francs have passed into their hands."

"Precisely so."

"And beyond that?"

"A sum of 150,000 francs, or 15,000 pistoles, whichever you please, in three payments."

"Exorbitant."

"Yes, but that is not all."

"What besides?"

"In default of the fulfillment by me of any one of those conditions, those gentlemen enter upon their functions again. The king has been induced to sign that."

"It is monstrous, incredible!"

"Such is the fact, however."

"I do indeed pity you, Baisemeaux. But why, in the name of fortune, did M. Mazarin grant you this pretended favor? It would have been far better to have refused you altogether."

"Certainly, but he was strongly persuaded to do so by my protector."

"Who is he?"

"One of your own friends, indeed; M. d'Herblay."

"M. d'Herblay! Aramis!"

"Just so; he has been very kind towards me."

"Kind! to make you enter into such a bargain."

"Listen! I wished to leave the cardinal's service. M. d'Herblay spoke on my behalf to Louvière and Tremblay—they objected; I wished to have the appointment very much, for I knew what it could be made to produce; in my distress I confided in M. d'Herblay, and he offered to become my surety for the different payments."

"You astound me! Aramis become your surety?"

"Like a man of honor; he procured the signature; Tremblay and Louvière resigned their appointments; I have paid every year 25,000 francs to these two gentlemen; on the 31st of May, every year, M. d'Herblay himself comes to the Bastille, and brings me 5,000 pistoles to distribute between my crocodiles."

"You owe Aramis 150,000 francs, then?"

"That is the very thing which is the cause of my despair, for I only owe him 100,000."

"I don't quite understand you."

"He came and settled with the vampires only two years. To-day, however, is the 31st of May, and he has not been yet, and to-morrow, at midday, the payment falls due; if, therefore, I don't pay to-morrow, those gentlemen can, by the terms of the contract, break off the bargain; I shall be stripped of everything; I shall have

worked for three years, and given 250,000 francs for nothing, absolutely for nothing at all, dear M. d'Artagnan."

"This is very strange," murmured D'Artagnan.

"You can now imagine that I may well have wrinkles on my forehead ; can you not ?"

"Yes, indeed !"

"And you can imagine, too, that notwithstanding I may be as round as a cheese, with a complexion like an apple, and my eyes like coals on fire, I may almost be afraid that I shall not have a cheese or an apple left me to eat, and that my eyes will be left me only to weep with."

"It is really a very grievous affair."

"I have come to you, M. d'Artagnan, for you are the only man who can get me out of my trouble."

"In what way ?"

"You are acquainted with the Abbé d'Herblay, and you know that he is a somewhat mysterious gentleman."

"Yes."

"Well, you can, perhaps, give me the address of his presbytery, for I have been to Noisy-le-Sec, and he is no longer there."

"I should think not, indeed. He is Bishop of Vannes."

"What ! Vannes in Bretagne ?"

"Yes."

The little man began to tear his hair, saying, "How can I get to Vannes from here by midday to-morrow. I am a lost man."

"Your despair quite distresses me."

"Vannes, Vannes," cried Baisemeaux.

"But, listen ; a bishop is not always a resident. M. d'Herblay may not possibly be so far away as you fear."

"Pray, tell me his address."

"I really don't know it."

"In that case, I am lost. I will go and throw myself at the king's feet."

"But, Baisemeaux, I can hardly believe what you tell me; besides, since the Bastille is capable of producing 50,000 francs a year, why have you not tried to screw 100,000 out of it?"

"Because I am an honest man, M. d'Artagnan, and because my prisoners are fed like ambassadors."

"Well, you're in a fair way to get out of your difficulties; give yourself a good attack of indigestion with your excellent living, and put yourself out of the way between this and midday to-morrow."

"How can you be hard-hearted enough to laugh?"

"Nay, you really afflict me. Come, Baisemeaux, if you can pledge me your word of honor, do so, that you will not open your lips to any one about what I am going to say to you."

"Never, never!"

"You wish to put your hand on Aramis?"

"At any cost!"

"Well, go and see where M. Fouquet is."

"Why, what connection can there be——"

"How stupid you are! Don't you know that Vannes is in the diocese of Belle-Isle, or Belle-Isle in the diocese of Vannes? Belle-Isle belongs to M. Fouquet, and M. Fouquet nominated M. d'Herblay to that bishopric!"

"I see, I see; you restore me to life again."

"So much the better. Go and tell M. Fouquet very simply that you wish to speak to M. d'Herblay."

"Of course, of course," exclaimed Baisemeaux, delightedly.

"But," said D'Artagnan, checking him by a severe look, "your word of honor?"

"I give you my sacred word of honor," replied the little man, about to set off running.

"Where are you going?"

"To M. Fouquet's house."

"It is useless doing that; M. Fouquet is playing at cards with the king. All you can do is to pay M. Fouquet a visit early to-morrow morning."

"I will do so. Thank you."

"Good luck attend you," said D'Artagnan.

"Thank you."

"This is a strange affair," murmured D'Artagnan, as he slowly ascended the staircase after he had left Baisemeaux. "What possible interest can Aramis have in obliging Baisemeaux in this manner? Well, I suppose we shall learn some day or another."

CHAPTER XL.

THE KING'S CARD-TABLE.

FOUQUET was present, as D'Artagnan had said, at the king's card-table. It seemed as if Buckingham's departure had shed a balm on the lacerated hearts of the previous evening. Monsieur, radiant with delight, made a thousand affectionate signs to his mother. The Count de Guiche could not separate himself from Buckingham, and while playing, conversed with him upon the circumstances of his projected voyage. Buckingham, thoughtful, and kind in his manner, like a man who has adopted a resolution, listened to the count, and from time to time cast a look full of regret and hopeless affection at Madame. The princess, in the midst of her elation of spirits, divided her attention between the king, who was playing with her, Monsieur, who quietly joked her about her enormous winnings, and De Guiche, who exhibited an extravagant delight. Of Buckingham she took but little notice: for her, this fugitive, this exile, was now simply a remem-

brance, no longer a man. Light hearts are thus constituted; while they themselves continue untouched, they roughly break off with every one who may possibly interfere with their little calculations of selfish comfort. Madame had received Buckingham's smiles and attentions and sighs, while he was present; but what was the good of sighing, smiling, and kneeling at a distance? Can one tell in what direction the winds in the Channel, which toss mighty vessels to and fro, carry such sighs as these? The duke could not fail to mark this change, and his heart was cruelly hurt. Of a sensitive character, proud and susceptible of deep attachment, he cursed the day on which such a passion had entered his heart. The looks he cast, from time to time, at Madame, became colder by degrees at the chilling complexion of his thoughts. He could hardly yet despair, but he was strong enough to impose silence upon the tumultuous outcries of his heart. In exact proportion, however, as Madame suspected this change of feeling, she redoubled her activity to regain the ray of light she was about to lose: her timid and indecisive mind was displayed in brilliant flashes of wit and humor. At any cost, she felt that she must be remarked above everything and every one, even above the king himself. And she was so, for the queens, notwithstanding their dignity, and the king, despite the respect which etiquette required, were all eclipsed by her. The queens, stately and ceremonious, were softened, and could not restrain their laughter. Madame Henrietta, the queen-mother, was dazzled by the brilliancy which cast distinction upon her family, thanks to the wit of the granddaughter of Henry IV. The king, jealous, as a young man and as a monarch, of the superiority of those who surrounded him, could not resist admitting himself vanquished by a petulance so thoroughly French in its nature, whose energy was more than ever increased by English

humor. Like a child, he was captivated by her radiant beauty, which her wit made still more dazzling. Madame's eyes flashed like lightning. Wit and humor escaped from her scarlet lips, like persuasion from the lips of Nestor of old. The whole court, subdued by her enchanting grace, noticed for the first time, that laughter could be indulged in before the greatest monarch in the world, like people who merited their appellation of the wittiest and most polished people in Europe.

Madame, from that evening, achieved and enjoyed a success capable of bewildering all not born to those altitudes termed thrones; which, in spite of their elevation, are sheltered from such giddiness. From that very moment Louis XIV. acknowledged Madame as a person to be recognized. Buckingham regarded her as a *coquette* deserving the cruelest tortures, and De Guiche looked upon her as a divinity; the courtiers as a star whose light might some day become the focus of all favor and power. And yet Louis XIV., a few years previously, had not even condescended to offer his hand to that "ugly girl" for a ballet; and Buckingham had worshipped this *coquette* "on both knees"—De Guiche had once looked upon this divinity as a mere woman; and the courtiers had not dared to extol this star in her upward progress, fearful to disgust the monarch whom such a dull star had formerly displeased.

Let us see what was taking place during this memorable evening at the king's card-table. The young queen, although Spanish by birth, and the niece of Anne of Austria, loved the king, and could not conceal her affection. Anne of Austria, a keen observer, like all women, and imperious, like every queen, was sensible of Madame's power and acquiesced in it immediately, a circumstance which induced the young queen to raise the siege and retire to her apartments. The king hardly paid any attention to

her departure, notwithstanding the pretended symptoms of indisposition by which it was accompanied. Encouraged by the rules of etiquette, which he had begun to introduce at the court as an element of every relation of life, Louis XIV. did not disturb himself; he offered his hand to Madame without looking at Monsieur his brother, and led the young princess to the door of her apartments. It was remarked, that at the threshold of the door, his majesty, freed from every restraint, or not equal to the situation, sighed very deeply. The ladies present—for nothing escapes a woman's glance—Mademoiselle Montalais, for instance—did not fail to say to each other, "the king sighed," and "Madame sighed too." This had been indeed the case. Madame had sighed very noiselessly, but with an accompaniment very far more dangerous for the king's repose. Madame had sighed, first closing her beautiful black eyes, next opening them, and then, laden, as they were, with an indescribable mournfulness of expression, she had raised them towards the king, whose face at that moment visibly heightened in color. The consequence of these blushes, of these interchanged sighs, and of this royal agitation, was, that Montalais had committed an indiscretion, which had certainly affected her companion, for Mademoiselle de la Vallière, less clear-sighted, perhaps, turned pale when the king blushed; and her attendance being required upon Madame, she tremblingly followed the princess without thinking of taking the gloves, which court etiquette required her to do. True it is that this young country girl might allege as her excuse the agitation into which the king seemed to be thrown, for Mademoiselle de la Vallière, busily engaged in closing the door, had involuntarily fixed her eyes upon the king, who, as he retired backwards, had his face towards it. The king returned to the room where the card-tables were set out. He wished to speak to the dis-

ferent persons there, but it was easy to see that his mind was absent. He jumbled different accounts together, which was taken advantage of by some of the noblemen who had retained those habits since the time of Monsieur Mazarin—who had a poor memory, but was a good calculator. In this way, Monsieur Manicamp, with a thoughtless and absent air,—for Monsieur Manicamp was the honestest man in the world, appropriated 20,000-francs, which were littering the table, and which did not seem to belong to any person in particular. In the same way, Monsieur de Wardes, whose head was doubtless a little bewildered by the occurrences of the evening, somehow forgot to leave behind him the sixty double louis which he had won for the Duke of Buckingham, and which the duke, incapable, like his father, of soiling his hands with coin of any sort, had left lying on the table before him. The king only recovered his attention in some degree at the moment that Monsieur Colbert, who had been narrowly observant for some minutes, approached, and, doubtless, with great respect, yet with much perseverance, whispered a counsel of some sort into the still tingling ears of the king. The king, at the suggestion, listened with renewed attention, and immediately looking around him, said, “Is Monsieur Fouquet no longer here?”

“Yes, sire, I am here,” replied the superintendent, till then engaged with Buckingham, and approached the king, who advanced a step towards him with a smiling yet negligent air. “Forgive me,” said Louis, “if I interrupt your conversation; but I claim your attention wherever I may require your services.”

“I am always at the king’s service,” replied Fouquet.

“And your cash-box too,” said the king, laughing with a false smile.

“My cash-box more than anything else,” said Fouquet, coldly.

"The fact is, I wish to give a *fête* at Fontainebleau—to keep open house for fifteen days, and I shall require——" and he stopped, glancing at Colbert. Fouquet waited without showing discomposure; and the king resumed, answering Colbert's icy smile, "Four million francs."

"Four million," repeated Fouquet, bowing profoundly. And his nails, buried in his bosom, were thrust into his flesh, but the tranquil expression of his face remaining unaltered. "When will they be required, sire?"

"Take your time,—I mean—no, no; as soon as possible."

"A certain time will be necessary, sire."

"Time!" exclaimed Colbert, triumphantly.

"The time, monsieur," said the superintendent, with the haughtiest disdain, "simply to *count the money*; a million can only be drawn and weighed in a day."

"Four days then," said Colbert.

"My clerks," replied Fouquet, addressing himself to the king, "will perform wonders on his majesty's service, and the sum shall be ready in three days."

It was for Colbert now to turn pale. Louis looked at him astonished. Fouquet withdrew without any parade or weakness, smiling at his numerous friends, in whose countenances alone he read the sincerity of their friendship—an interest partaking of compassion. Fouquet, however, should not be judged by his smile, for, in reality, he felt as if he had been stricken by death. Drops of blood beneath his coat stained the fine linen that clothed his chest. His dress concealed the blood, and his smile the rage which devoured him. His domestics perceived, by the manner in which he approached his carriage, that their master was not in the best of humors: the result of their discernment was, that his orders were executed with that exactitude of maneuver which is found on board a man-of-war, commanded during a storm by an ill-tem-

pered captain. The carriage, therefore, did not simply roll along—it flew. Fouquet had hardly time to recover himself during the drive; on his arrival he went at once to Aramis, who had not yet retired for the night. As for Porthos, he had supped very agreeably off a roast leg of mutton, two pheasants, and a perfect heap of cray-fish; he then directed his body to be anointed with perfumed oils, in the manner of the wrestlers of old; and when this anointment was completed, he had himself wrapped in flannels and placed in a warm bed. Aramis, as we have already said, had not retired. Seated at his ease in a velvet dressing-gown, he wrote letter after letter in that fine and hurried handwriting, a page of which contained a quarter of a volume. The door was thrown hurriedly open, and the superintendent appeared, pale, agitated, anxious. Aramis looked up: “Good-evening,” said he; and his searching look detected his host’s sadness and disordered state of mind. “Was your play as good as his majesty’s?” asked Aramis, by way of beginning the conversation.

Fouquet threw himself upon a couch, and then pointed to the door to the servant who had followed him; when the servant had left he said, “Excellent.”

Aramis, who had followed every movement with his eyes, noticed that he stretched himself upon the cushions with a sort of feverish impatience. “You have lost as usual?” inquired Aramis, his pen still in his hand.

“Even more than usual,” replied Fouquet.

“You know how to support losses.”

“Sometimes.”

“What, Monsieur Fouquet a bad player!”

“There is play and play, Monsieur d’Herblay.”

“How much have you lost?” inquired Aramis, with a slight uneasiness.

Fouquet collected himself a moment, and then, without

the slightest emotion, said, "The evening has cost me four millions," and a bitter laugh drowned the last vibration of these words.

Aramis, who did not expect such an amount, dropped his pen. "Four millions," he said; "you have lost four millions,—impossible!"

"Monsieur Colbert held my cards for me," replied the superintendent, with a similar bitter laugh.

"Ah, now I understand; so, so, a new application for funds?"

"Yes, and from the king's own lips. It was impossible to ruin a man with a more charming smile. What do you think of it?"

"It is clear that your destruction is the object in view."

"That is your opinion?"

"Still. Besides, there is nothing in it which should astonish you, for we have foreseen it all along."

"Yes; but I did not expect four millions."

"No doubt the amount is serious, but, after all, four millions are not quite the death of a man, especially when the man in question is Monsieur Fouquet."

"My dear D'Herblay, if you knew the contents of my coffers, you would be less easy."

"And you promised?"

"What could I *do*?"

"That's true."

"The very day I refuse, Colbert will procure the money; whence I know not, but he *will* procure it: and I shall be lost."

"There is no doubt of that. In how many days did you promise these four millions?"

"In three days. The king seemed exceedingly pressed."

"*In three days?*"

"When I think," resumed Fouquet, "that just now,

as I passed along the streets, the people cried out, 'There is the rich Monsieur Fouquet,' it is enough to turn my brain."

"Stay, monsieur, the matter is not worth so much trouble," said Aramis, calmly, sprinkling some sand over the letter he had just written."

"Suggest a remedy, then, for this evil without a remedy."

"There is only one remedy for you,—pay."

"But it is very uncertain whether I have the money. Everything must be exhausted; Belle-Isle is paid for; the pension has been paid; and money, since the investigation of the accounts of those who farm the revenue, is scarce. Besides, admitting that I pay this time, how can I do so on another occasion? When kings have tasted money, they are like tigers who have tasted flesh, they devour everything. The day will arrive—*must* arrive—when I shall have to say, 'Impossible, sire,' and on that very day I am a lost man."

Aramis raised his shoulders slightly, saying,

"A man in your position, my lord, is only lost when he wishes to be so."

"A man, whatever his position may be, cannot hope to struggle against a king."

"Nonsense; when I was young I wrestled successfully with the Cardinal Richelieu, who was king of France,—nay more—cardinal."

"Where are my armies, my troops, my treasures? I have not even Belle-Isle."

"Bah! necessity is the mother of invention, and when you think all is lost, something will be discovered which will retrieve everything."

"Who will discover this wonderful something?"

"Yourself."

"I! I resign my office of inventor."

"Then I will."

"Be it so. But set to work without delay."

"Oh! we have time enough!"

"You kill me, D'Herblay, with your calmness," said the superintendent, passing his handkerchief over his face.

"Do you not remember that I one day told you not to make yourself uneasy, if you possessed courage. *Have* you any?"

"I believe so."

"Then don't make yourself uneasy."

"It is decided then, that, at the last moment, you will come to my assistance."

"It will only be the repayment of a debt I owe you."

"It is the vocation of financiers to anticipate the wants of men such as yourself, D'Herblay."

"If obligingness is the vocation of financiers, charity is the virtue of the clergy. Only, on this occasion, do you act, monsieur. You are not yet sufficiently reduced, and at the last moment we will see what is to be done."

"We shall see, then, in a very short time."

"Very well. However, permit me to tell you that, personally, I regret exceedingly that you are at present so short of money, because I was myself about to ask you for some."

"For yourself?"

"For myself, or some of my people, for mine or for ours."

"How much do you want?"

"Be easy on that score; a roundish sum, it is true, but not too exorbitant."

"Tell me the amount."

"Fifty thousand francs."

"Oh! a mere nothing. Of course one has always 50,000 francs. Why the deuce cannot that knave Colbert be as easily satisfied as you are—and I should give myself

far less trouble than I do. When do you need this sum?"

"To-morrow morning; but you wish to know its destination."

"Nay, nay, chevalier, I need no explanation."

"To-morrow is the first of June."

"Well?"

"One of our bonds becomes due."

"I did not know we had any bonds."

"Certainly, to-morrow we pay our last third instalment."

"What third?"

"Of the 150,000 francs to Baisemeaux."

"Baisemeaux? Who is he?"

"The governor of the Bastile."

"Yes, I remember. On what grounds am I to pay 150,000 francs for that man?"

"On account of the appointment which he, or rather we, purchased from Louvière and Tremblay."

"I have a very vague recollection of the matter."

"That is likely enough, for you have so many affairs to attend to. However, I do not believe you have any affair in the world of greater importance than this one."

"Tell me, then, why we purchased this appointment."

"Why, in order to render him a service in the first place, and afterwards ourselves."

"Ourselves? You are joking."

"Monseigneur, the time may come when the governor of the Bastile may prove a very excellent acquaintance."

"I have not the good fortune to understand you, D'Herblay."

"Monseigneur, we had our own poets, our own engineer, our own architect, our own musicians, our own printer, and our own painters; we needed our own governor of the Bastile."

"Do you think so?"

"Let us not deceive ourselves, monseigneur; we are

very much opposed to paying the Bastile a visit," added the prelate, displaying, beneath his pale lips, teeth which were still the same beautiful teeth so much admired thirty years previously by Marie Michon.

"And you think it is not too much to pay 150,000 francs for that? I thought you generally put out money at better interest than that."

"The day will come when you will admit your mistake."

"My dear D'Herblay, the very day on which a man enters the Bastile, he is no longer protected by his past."

"Yes, he is, if the bonds are perfectly regular; besides, that good fellow Baisemeaux has not a courtier's heart. I am certain, my lord, that he will not remain ungrateful for that money, without taking into account, I repeat, that I retain the acknowledgments."

"It is a strange affair! usury in a matter of benevolence."

"Do not mix yourself up with it, monseigneur; if there be usury, it is I who practice it, and both of us reap the advantage from it—that is all."

"Some intrigue, D'Herblay?"

"I do not deny it."

"And Baisemeaux an accomplice in it?"

"Why not?—there are worse accomplices than he? May I depend, then, upon the 5,000 pistoles to-morrow?"

"Do you want them this evening?"

"It would be better, for I wish to start early; poor Baisemeaux will not be able to imagine what has become of me, and must be upon thorns."

You shall have the amount in an hour. Ah, D'Herblay, the interest of your 150,000 francs will never pay my four millions for me."

"Why not, monseigneur?"

"Good-night, I have business to transact with my clerks before I retire."

"A good night's rest, monseigneur."

"D'Herblay, you wish things that are impossible."

"Shall I have my 50,000 francs this evening?"

"Yes."

"Go to sleep, then, in perfect safety—it is I who tell you to do so."

Notwithstanding this assurance, and the tone in which it was given, Fouquet left the room shaking his head, and heaving a sigh.

CHAPTER XLII.

M. BAISEMEAUX DE MONTLEZUN'S ACCOUNTS.

THE clock of St. Paul was striking seven as Aramis, on horseback, dressed as a simple citizen, that is to say, in colored suit, with no distinctive mark about him, except a kind of hunting-knife by his side, passed before the Rue du Petit-Muse, and stopped opposite the Rue des Tournelles, at the gate of the Bastile. Two sentinels were on duty at the gate; they made no difficulty about admitting Aramis, who entered without dismounting, and they pointed out the way he was to go by a long passage with buildings on both sides. This passage led to the drawbridge, or, in other words, to the real entrance. The drawbridge was down, and the duty of the day was about being entered upon. The sentinel at the outer guard-house stopped Aramis's further progress, asking him, in a rough tone of voice, what had brought him there. Aramis explained, with his usual politeness, that a wish to speak to M. Baisemeaux de Montlezun had occasioned his visit. The first sentinel then summoned a second sentinel, stationed within an inner lodge, who showed his face at

the grating, and inspected the new arrival most attentively. Aramis reiterated the expression of his wish to see the governor; whereupon the sentinel called to an officer of lower grade, who was walking about in a tolerably spacious courtyard and who, in turn, on being informed of his object, ran to seek one of the officers of the governor's staff. The latter, after having listened to Aramis's request, begged him to wait a moment, then went away a short distance, but returned to ask his name. "I cannot tell it you, monsieur," said Aramis; "I need only mention, that I have matters of such importance to communicate to the governor, that I can only rely beforehand upon one thing, that M. de Baisemeaux will be delighted to see me; nay, more than that, when you have told him that it is the person whom he expected on the 1st of June, I am convinced he will hasten here himself." The officer could not possibly believe that a man of the governor's importance should put himself out for a person of so little importance as the citizen-looking visitor on horseback. "It happens most fortunately, monsieur," he said, "that the governor is just going out, and you can perceive his carriage, with the horses already harnessed, in the courtyard yonder; there will be no occasion for him to come to meet you, as he will see you as he passes by." Aramis bowed to signify his assent; he did not wish to inspire others with too exalted an opinion of himself, and therefore waited patiently and in silence, leaning upon the saddle-bow of his horse. Ten minutes had hardly elapsed when the governor's carriage was observed to move. The governor appeared at the door, and got into the carriage, which immediately prepared to start. The same ceremony was observed for the governor himself as with a suspected stranger; the sentinel at the lodge advanced as the carriage was about to pass under the arch, and the governor opened the carriage-door, himself setting the example of

obedience to orders; so that, in this way, the sentinel could convince himself that no one quitted the Bastile improperly. The carriage rolled along under the archway, but at the moment the iron-gate was opened, the officer approached the carriage, which had been again stopped, and said something to the governor, who immediately put his head out of the door-way, and perceived Aramis on horseback at the end of the drawbridge. He immediately uttered almost a shout of delight, and got out, or rather darted out of his carriage, running towards Aramis, whose hands he seized, making a thousand apologies. He almost embraced him. "What a difficult matter to enter the Bastile!" said Aramis. "Is it the same for those who are sent here against their wills, as for those who come of their own accord?"

"A thousand pardons, my lord. How delighted I am to see your grace."

"Hush! What are you thinking of, my dear M. Baisemeaux? What do you suppose would be thought of a bishop in my present costume?"

"Pray excuse me, I had forgotten. Take this gentleman's horse to the stables," cried Baisemeaux.

"No, no," said Aramis, "I have 5,000 pistoles in the saddle-bags."

The governor's countenance became so radiant, that if the prisoners had seen him they would have imagined some prince of the blood royal had arrived. "Yes, you are right, the horse shall be taken to the government house. Will you get into the carriage, my dear M. d'Herblay, and it shall take us back to my house."

"Get into a carriage to cross a courtyard! do you believe I am so great an invalid? No, no, we will go on foot."

Baisemeaux then offered his arm as a support, but the prelate did not accept it. They arrived in this manner

at the government house, Baisemeaux rubbing his hands and glancing at the horse from time to time, while Aramis was looking at the bleak bare walls. A tolerably handsome vestibule, and a staircase of white stone led to the governor's apartments, who crossed the antechamber, the dining-room, where breakfast was being prepared, opened a small side-door, and closeted himself with his guest in a large cabinet, the windows of which opened obliquely upon the courtyard and the stables. Baisemeaux installed the prelate with that all-inclusive politeness of which a good man, or a grateful man, alone possesses the secret. An arm-chair, a footstool, a small table beside him, on which to rest his hand, everything was prepared by the governor himself. With his own hands, too, he placed upon the table, with much solicitude, the bag containing the gold, which one of the soldiers had brought up with the most respectful devotion ; and the soldier having left the room, Baisemeaux himself closed the door after him, drew aside one of the window-curtains, and looked steadfastly at Aramis to see if the prelate required anything further.

"Well, my lord," he said, still standing up, "of all men of their word, you still continue to be the most punctual."

"In matters of business, dear M. de Baisemeaux, exactitude is not a virtue only, it is a duty as well."

"Yes, in matters of business, certainly ; but what you have with me is not of that character, it is a service you are rendering me."

"Come, confess, dear M. de Baisemeaux, that, notwithstanding this exactitude, you have not been without a little uneasiness."

"About your health, I certainly have," stammered out Baisemeaux.

"I wished to come here yesterday, but I was not able, as I was too fatigued," continued Aramis. Baisemeaux

anxiously slipped another cushion behind his guest's back. "But," continued Aramis, "I promised myself to come and pay you a visit to-day, early in the morning."

"You are really very kind, my lord "

"And it was a good thing for me I was punctual, I think."

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, you were going out." At which latter remark Baisemeaux colored and said, "It is true I was going out."

"Then I prevent you," said Aramis; whereupon the embarrassment of Baisemeaux became visibly greater. "I am putting you to inconvenience," he continued, fixing a keen glance upon the poor governor; "if I had known that, I should not have come."

"How can your lordship imagine that you could ever inconvenience me?"

"Confess you were going in search of money."

"No," stammered out Baisemeaux, "no! I assure you I was going to——"

"Does the governor still intend to go to M. Fouquet," suddenly called out the major from below. Baisemeaux ran to the window like a madman. "No, no," he exclaimed in a state of desperation, "who the deuce is speaking of M. Fouquet? are you drunk below there? why am I interrupted when I am engaged on business?"

"You were going to M. Fouquet's," said Aramis, biting his lips, "to M. Fouquet, the abbé, or the superintendent?"

Baisemeaux almost made up his mind to tell an untruth, but he could not summon courage to do so. "To the superintendent," he said.

"It is true, then, that you were in want of money, since you were going to a person who gives it away!"

"I assure you, my lord——"

"You were afraid?"

"My dear lord, it was the uncertainty and ignorance in which I was as to where you were to be found."

"You would have found the money you require at M. Fouquet's, for he is a man whose hand is always open."

"I swear that I should never have ventured to ask M. Fouquet for money. I only wished to ask him for your address."

"To ask M. Fouquet for my address?" exclaimed Aramis, opening his eyes in real astonishment.

"Yes," said Baisemeaux, greatly disturbed by the glance which the prelate fixed upon him,—“at M. Fouquet's certainly."

"There is no harm in that, dear M. Baisemeaux, only I would ask, why ask my address of M. Fouquet?"

"That I might write to you."

"I understand," said Aramis smiling, "but that is not what I meant; I do not ask you what you required my address for: I only ask why you should go to M. Fouquet for it?"

"Oh!" said Baisemeaux, "as Belle-Isle is the property of M. Fouquet, and as Belle-Isle is in the diocese of Vannes, and as you are bishop of Vannes——"

"But, my dear Baisemeaux, since you know I was bishop of Vannes, you had no occasion to ask M. Fouquet for my address."

"Well, monsieur," said Baisemeaux, completely at bay, "if I have acted indiscreetly, I beg your pardon most sincerely."

"Nonsense," observed Aramis, calmly: "how can you possibly have acted indiscreetly?" And while he composed his face, and continued to smile cheerfully on the governor, he was considering how Baisemeaux, who was not aware of his address, knew, however, that Vannes was his residence. "I shall clear all this up," he said to

himself; and then speaking aloud, added, "Well, my dear governor, shall we now arrange our little accounts?"

"I am at your orders, my lord; but tell me beforehand, my lord, whether you will do me the honor to breakfast with me as usual?"

"Very willingly, indeed."

"That's well," said Baisemeaux, as he struck the bell before him three times.

"What does that mean?" inquired Aramis.

"That I have some one to breakfast with me, and that preparations are to be made accordingly."

"And you rang thrice. Really, my dear governor, I begin to think you are acting ceremoniously with me."

"No, indeed. Besides, the least I can do is to receive you in the best way I can."

"But why so?"

"Because not even a prince could have done what you have done for me."

"Nonsense! nonsense!"

"Nay, I assure you——"

"Let us speak of other matters," said Aramis. "Or rather, tell me how your affairs here are getting on?"

"Not over well."

"The deuce!"

"M. de Mazarin was not hard enough."

"Yes, I see; you require a government full of suspicion—like that of the old cardinal, for instance."

"Yes; matters went on better under him. The brother of his 'gray eminence' made his fortune here."

"Believe me, my dear governor," said Aramis, drawing closer to Baisemeaux, "a young king is well worth an old cardinal. Youth has its suspicions, its fits of anger, its prejudices, as old age has its hatreds, its precautions, and its fears. Have you paid your three years' profits to Louvière and Tremblay?"

"Most certainly I have."

"So that you have nothing more to give them than the fifty thousand francs I have brought with me?"

"Nothing."

"Have you not saved anything, then?"

"My lord, in giving the fifty thousand francs of my own to these gentlemen, I assure you that I give them everything I gain. I told M. D'Artagnan so yesterday evening."

"Ah!" said Aramis, whose eyes sparkled for a moment, but became immediately afterwards as unmoved as before; "so you have seen my old friend D'Artagnan; how was he?"

"Wonderfully well."

"And what did you say to him, M. de Baisemeaux?"

"I told him," continued the governor, not perceiving his own thoughtlessness; "I told him that I fed my prisoners too well."

"How many have you?" inquired Aramis, in an indifferent tone of voice.

"Sixty."

"Well, that is a tolerably round number."

"In former times, my lord, there were, during certain years, as many as two hundred."

"Still a minimum of sixty is not to be grumbled at."

"Perhaps not; for, to anybody but myself, each prisoner would bring in two hundred and fifty pistoles; for instance, for a prince of the blood I have fifty francs a day."

"Only you have no prince of the blood; at least, I suppose so," said Aramis, with a slight tremor in his voice.

"No, thank heaven!—I mean, no, unfortunately."

"What do you mean by unfortunately?"

"Because my appointment would be improved by it. So, fifty francs per day for a prince of the blood, thirty-six for a *maréchal* of France——"

"But you have as many *maréchals* of France, I suppose, as you have princes of the blood!"

"Alas! no more. It is true lieutenant-generals and brigadiers pay twenty-six francs, and I have two of them. After that, come councilors of parliament, who bring me fifteen francs, and I have six of them."

"I did not know," said Aramis, "that councilors were so productive."

"Yes; but from fifteen francs I sink at once to ten francs; namely, for an ordinary judge, and for an ecclesiastic."

"And you have seven, you say; an excellent affair."

"Nay, a bad one, and for this reason. How can I possibly treat these poor fellows, who are of some good, at all events, otherwise than as a councilor of parliament?"

"Yes, you are right; I do not see five francs difference between them."

"You understand; if I have a fine fish, I pay four or five francs for it; if I get a fine fowl, it costs me a franc and a half. I fatten a good deal of poultry, but I have to buy grain, and you cannot imagine the army of rats that infest this place."

"Why not get half a dozen cats to deal with them?"

"Cats indeed; yes, they eat them, but I was obliged to give up the idea because of the way in which they treated my grain. I have been obliged to have some terrier dogs sent me from England to kill the rats. These dogs unfortunately, have tremendous appetites; they eat as much as a prisoner of the fifth order, without taking into account the rabbits and fowls they kill."

Was Aramis really listening or not? No one could have told; his downcast eyes showed the attentive man, but the restless hand betrayed the man absorbed in thought—Aramis was meditating.

"I was saying," continued Baisemeaux, "that a good-

sized fowl costs me a franc and a half, and that a fine fish costs me four or five francs. Three meals are served at the Bastille, and, as the prisoners, having nothing to do, are always eating, a ten-franc man costs me seven francs and a half."

"But did you not say that you treated those at ten francs like those at fifteen?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Very well! Then you gain seven francs and a half upon those who pay you fifteen francs."

"I *must* compensate myself somehow," said Baisemeaux, who saw how he had been snapped up.

"You are quite right, my dear governor; but have you no prisoners below ten francs?"

"Oh, yes! we have citizens, and barristers at five francs."

"And do they eat, too?"

"Not a doubt about it; only you understand that they do not get fish or poultry, nor rich wines at every meal; but at all events thrice a week they have a good dish at their dinner."

"Really, you are quite a philanthropist, my dear governor, and you will ruin yourself."

"No; understand me; when the fifteen francs has not eaten his fowl, or the ten francs has left his dish unfinished, I send it to the five-franc prisoner; it is a feast for the poor devil, and one must be charitable, you know."

"And what do you make out of your five-franc prisoners?"

"A franc and a half."

"Baisemeaux, you're an honest fellow; in honest truth I say so."

"Thank you, my lord. But I feel most for the small tradesmen and bailiffs' clerks, who are rated at three

francs. They do not often see Rhine carp or Channel sturgeon."

"But do not the five-franc gentlemen sometimes leave some scraps?"

"Oh! my lord, do not believe I am so stingy as that; I delight the heart of some poor little tradesman or clerk by sending him a wing of a red partridge, a slice of venison, or a slice of a truffled pasty, dishes which he never tasted except in his dreams; these are the leavings of the twenty-four-franc prisoners; and as he eats and drinks, at dessert he cries 'Long live the King,' and blesses the Bastille; with a couple of bottles of champagne, which costs me five sous, I make him tipsy every Sunday. That class of people call down blessings upon me, and are sorry to leave the prison. Do you know that I have remarked, and it does me infinite honor, that certain prisoners, who have been set at liberty, have, almost immediately afterwards, got imprisoned again? Why should this be the case, unless it be to enjoy the pleasures of my kitchen? It is really the fact."

Aramis smiled with an expression of incredulity.

"You smile," said Baisemeaux.

"I do," returned Aramis.

"I tell you that we have names which have been inscribed on our books thrice in the space of two years."

"I must see it before I believe it," said Aramis.

"Well, I can show it to you, although it is prohibited to communicate the registers to strangers; and if you really wish to see it with your own eyes——"

"I should be delighted, I confess."

"Very well," said Baisemeaux, and he took out of a cupboard a large register. Aramis followed him most anxiously with his eyes, and Baisemeaux returned, placed the register upon the table, and turned over the leaves for a minute, and staid at the letter M.

"Look here," said he, "Martinier, January, 1659; Martinier, June, 1660; Martinier, March, 1661. Mazarinades, etc.; you understand it was only a pretext; people were not sent to the Bastille for jokes against M. Mazarin; the fellow denounced himself in order to get imprisoned here."

"And what was his object?"

"None other than to return to my kitchen at three francs a day."

"Three francs—poor devil!"

"The poet, my lord, belongs to the lowest scale, the same style of board as the small tradesman and bailiff's clerk; but I repeat it is to those people only that I give these little surprises."

Aramis mechanically turned over the leaves of the register, continuing to read the names, but without appearing to take any interest in the names he read.

"In 1661, you perceive," said Baisemeaux, "eighty entries; and in 1659, eighty also."

"Ah!" said Aramis. "Seldon; I seem to know that name. Was it not you who spoke to me about a certain young man?"

"Yes, a poor devil of a student, who made——What do you call that where two Latin verses rhyme together?"

"A distich."

"Yes; that is it."

"Poor fellow; for a distich."

"Do you know that he made this distich against the Jesuits?"

"That makes no difference; the punishment seems very severe."

"Do not pity him; last year you seemed to interest yourself in him."

"Yes, I did so."

"Well, as your interest is all-powerful here, my lord,

I have treated him since that time as a prisoner at fifteen francs."

"The same as this one, then," said Aramis, who had continued turning over the leaves, and who had stopped at one of the names which followed Martinier.

"Yes, the same as that one."

"Is that Marchiali an Italian?" said Aramis, pointing with his finger to the name which had attracted his attention.

"Hush!" said Baisemeaux.

"Why hush?" said Aramis, involuntarily clenching his white hand.

"I thought I had already spoken to you about that Marchiali."

"No, it is the first time I ever heard his name pronounced."

"That may be, but perhaps I have spoken to you about him without naming him."

"Is he an old offender?" asked Aramis, attempting to smile.

"On the contrary, he is quite young."

"Is his crime, then, very heinous?"

"Unpardonable."

"Has he assassinated any one?"

"Bah!"

"An incendiary, then?"

"Bah!"

"Has he slandered any one?"

"No, no! It is he who——" and Baisemeaux approached Aramis's ear, making a sort of ear-trumpet of his hands, and whispered, "It is he who presumes to resemble the——"

"Yes, yes," said Aramis, "I now remember you already spoke about it last year to me; but the crime appeared to me so slight."

"Slight, do you say?"

"Or rather, so involuntary."

"My lord, it is not involuntarily that such a resemblance is detected."

"Well, the fact is, I had forgotten it. But, my dear host," said Aramis, closing the register, "if I am not mistaken, we are summoned."

Baisemeaux took the register, hastily restored it to its place in the closet, which he locked, and put the key in his pocket. "Will it be agreeable to your lordship to breakfast now?" said he; "for you are right in supposing that breakfast was announced."

"Assuredly, my dear governor," and they passed into the dining-room.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BREAKFAST AT MONSIEUR DE BAISEMEAUX'S.

ARAMIS was generally temperate; but on this occasion, while taking every care of his constitution, he did ample justice to Baisemeaux's breakfast, which, in all respects, was most excellent. The latter, on his side, was animated with the wildest gayety; the sight of the five thousand pistoles, which he glanced at from time to time, seemed to open his heart. Every now and then he looked at Aramis with an expression of the deepest gratitude; while the latter, leaning back in his chair, took a few sips of wine from his glass, with the air of a connoisseur. "Let me never hear any ill words against the fare of the Bastile," said he, half-closing his eyes; "happy are the prisoners who can get only half a bottle of such Burgundy every day."

"All those at fifteen francs drink it," said Baisemeaux. "It is very old Volnay."

"Does that poor student, Seldon, drink such good wine?"

"Oh, no!"

"I thought I heard you say he was boarded at fifteen francs."

"He! no, indeed; a man who makes districts—distichs I mean—at fifteen francs. No, no! it is his neighbor who is at fifteen francs."

"Which neighbor?"

"The other, second Bertaudière."

"Excuse me, my dear governor; but you speak a language which requires quite an apprenticeship to understand."

"Very true," said the governor. "Allow me to explain:—second Bertaudière is the person who occupies the second floor of the tower of the Bertaudière."

"So that Bertaudière is the name of one of the towers of the Bastille? The fact is, I think I recollect hearing that each tower has a name of its own. Whereabouts is the one you are speaking of?"

"Look," said Baisemeaux, going to the window. "It is that tower to the left—the second one."

"Is the prisoner at fifteen francs there?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

"Seven or eight years, nearly."

"What do you mean by nearly? Do you not know the dates more precisely?"

"It was not in my time, M. d'Herblay."

"But I should have thought that Louvière or Tremblay would have told you."

"The secrets of the Bastille are never handed over with the keys of the governorship."

"Indeed! Then the cause of his imprisonment is a mystery—a state secret."

"Oh, no! I do not suppose it is a state secret, but a secret—like everything else that happens at the Bastile."

"But," said Aramis, "why do you speak more freely of Seldon than of second Bertaudière?"

"Because, in my opinion, the crime of the man who writes a distich is not so great as that of the man who resembles——"

"Yes, yes; I understand you. Still, do not the turnkeys talk with your prisoners?"

"Of course."

"The prisoners, I suppose, tell them they are not guilty?"

"They are *always* telling them that; it is a matter of course; the same song over and over again."

"But does not the resemblance you were speaking about just now strike the turnkeys?"

"My dear M. d'Herblay, it is only for men attached to the court, as you are, to take trouble about such matters."

"You're right, you're right, my dear M. Baisemeaux. Let me give you another taste of this Volnay."

"Not a taste merely, a full glass; fill yours, too."

"Nay, nay! You are a musketeer still, to the very tips of your fingers, while I have become a bishop. A taste for me; a glass for yourself."

"As you please." And Aramis and the governor nodded to each other, as they drank their wine. "But," said Aramis, looking with fixed attention at the ruby-colored wine he had raised to the level of his eyes, as if he wished to enjoy it with all his senses at the same moment, "but what you might call a resemblance, another would not, perhaps, take any notice of."

"Most certainly he would, though, if it were any one who knew the person he resembles."

"I really think, dear M. de Baisemeaux, that it can be nothing more than a resemblance of your own creation."

"Upon my honor, it is not so."

"Stay," continued Aramis. "I have seen many persons very like the one we are speaking of; but, out of respect, no one ever said anything about it."

"Very likely; because there is resemblance and resemblance. This is a striking one, and, if you were to see him, you would admit it to be so."

"If I were to see him, indeed," said Aramis, in an indifferent tone; "but in all probability I never shall."

"Why not?"

"Because if I were even to put my foot inside one of those horrible dungeons, I should fancy I was buried there forever."

"No, no; the cells are very good places to live in."

"I really do not, and cannot believe it, and that is a fact."

"Pray do not speak ill of second Bertaudière. It is really a good room, very nicely furnished and carpeted. The young fellow has by no means been unhappy there; the best lodging the Bastille affords has been his. There is a chance for you."

"Nay, nay," said Aramis, coldly; "you will never make me believe there are any good rooms in the Bastille; and, as for your carpets they exist only in your imagination. I should find nothing but spiders, rats, and perhaps toads, too."

"Toads?" cried Baisemeaux.

"Yes, in the dungeons."

"Ah! I don't say there are not toads in the dungeons," replied Baisemeaux. "But—will you be convinced by your own eyes?" he continued, with a sudden impulse.

"No, certainly not."

"Not even to satisfy yourself of the resemblance which you deny, as you do the carpets?"

"Some spectral-looking person, a mere shadow; an unhappy, dying man."

"Nothing of the kind—as brisk and vigorous a young fellow as ever lived."

"Melancholy and ill-tempered, then?"

"Not at all; very gay and lively."

"Nonsense; you are joking."

"Will you follow me?" said Baisemeaux.

"What for?"

"To go the round of the Bastile."

"Why?"

"You will then see for yourself—see with your own eyes."

"But the regulations?"

"Never mind them. To-day my major has leave of absence; the lieutenant is visiting the post on the bastions; we are sole masters of the situation."

"No, no, my dear governor; why, the very idea of the sound of the bolts makes me shudder. You will only have to forget me in second or fourth Bertaudière, and then——"

"You are refusing an opportunity that may never present itself again. Do you know that, to obtain the favor I propose to you gratis, some of the princes of the blood have offered me as much as fifty thousand francs."

"Really! he must be worth seeing, then?"

"Forbidden fruit, my lord; forbidden fruit. You who belong to the church ought to know that."

"Well, if I had any curiosity, it would be to see the poor author of the distich."

"Very well, we will see him too; but if I were at all curious, it would be about the beautiful carpeted room and its lodger."

"Furniture is very commonplace; and a face with no expression in it offers little or no interest."

"But a boarder at fifteen francs is always interesting."

"By the by, I forgot to ask you about that. Why fifteen francs for him, and only three francs for poor Seldon?"

"The distinction made in that instance was a truly noble act, and one which displayed the king's goodness of heart to great advantage."

"The king's, you say?"

"The cardinal's, I mean; this unhappy man," said M. Mazarin, "is destined to remain in prison forever."

"Why so?"

"Why it seems that his crime is a lasting one; and, consequently, his punishment ought to be so too."

"Lasting?"

"No doubt of it, unless he is fortunate enough to catch the small-pox, and even that is difficult, for we never get any impure air here."

"Nothing can be more ingenious than your train of reasoning, my dear M. de Baisemeaux. Do you, however, mean to say that this unfortunate man must suffer without interruption or termination?"

"I did not say he was to suffer, my lord; a fifteen-francs boarder does not suffer."

"He suffers imprisonment at all events."

"No doubt, there is no help for that, but this suffering is sweetened for him. You must admit that this young fellow was not born to eat all the good things he does eat; for instance, such things as we have on the table now; this pastry that has not been touched, these crawfish from the River Marne, of which we have hardly taken any, and which are almost as large as lobsters; all these things will at once be taken to second Bertaudière, with

a bottle of that Volnay which you think so excellent, After you have seen it you will believe it, I hope."

"Yes, my dear governor, certainly; but all this time you are thinking only of your very happy fifteen-francs prisoner, and you forget poor Seldon, my *protégé*."

"Well, out of consideration for you, it shall be a gala day for him; he shall have some biscuits and preserves with this small bottle of port."

"You are a good-hearted fellow; I have said so already, and I repeat it, my dear Baisemeaux."

"Well, let us set off, then," said the governor, a little bewildered, partly from the wine he had drunk, and partly from Aramis's praises.

"Do not forget that I only go to oblige you," said the prelate."

"Very well; but you will thank me when you get there."

"Let us go then."

"Wait until I have summoned the jailer," said Baisemeaux, as he struck the bell twice; at which summons a man appeared. "I am going to visit the towers," said the governor. "No guards, no drums, no noise at all."

"If I were not to leave my cloak here," said Aramis, pretending to be alarmed, "I should really think I was going to prison on my own account."

The jailer preceded the governor, Aramis walking on his right hand; some of the soldiers who happened to be in the courtyard drew themselves up in line, as stiff as posts, as the governor passed along. Baisemeaux led the way down several steps which conducted to a sort of esplanade; thence they arrived at the drawbridge, where the sentinels on duty received the governor with the proper honors. The governor turned toward Aramis, and, speaking in such a tone that the sentinels could not lose a

word he observed—"I hope you have a good memory, monsieur?"

"Why?" inquired Aramis.

"On account of your plans and your measurements, for you know that no one is allowed, not architects even, to enter where the prisoners are, with paper, pens or pencil."

"Good," said Aramis to himself, "it seems I am an architect, then? It sounds like one of D'Artagnan's jokes, who perceived in me the engineer of Belle-Isle." Then he added aloud, "Be easy on that score, monsieur; in our profession, a mere glance and a good memory are quite sufficient."

Baisemeaux did not change countenance, and the soldiers took Aramis for what he seemed to be. "Very well; we will first visit la Bertaudière," said Baisemeaux, still intending the sentinels to hear him. Then, turning to the jailer, he added, "you will take the opportunity of carrying to No. 2 the few dainties I pointed out."

"Dear M. de Baisemeaux," said Aramis, "you are always forgetting No. 3."

"So I am," said the governor; and, upon that, they began to ascend. The number of bolts, gratings, and locks, for this single courtyard, would have sufficed for the safety of an entire city. Aramis was neither an imaginative nor a sensitive man; he had been somewhat of a poet in his youth, but his heart was hard and indifferent, as the heart of every man of fifty-five years of age is, who has been frequently and passionately attached to women in his lifetime, or rather who has been passionately loved by them. But when he placed his foot upon the worn stone steps, along which so many unhappy wretches had passed, when he felt himself impregnated, as it were, with the atmosphere of those gloomy dungeons, moistened with tears, there could be but little doubt he was overcome by his feelings, for his head was bowed and his eyes became dim, as he followed Baisemeaux without a syllable.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SECOND FLOOR OF LA BERTAUDIÈRE.

ON the second flight of stairs, whether from fatigue or emotion, the breathing of the visitor began to fail him, and he leaned against the wall. "Will you begin with this one?" said Baisemeaux; "for since we are going to both, it matters very little whether we ascend from the second to the third story, or descend from the third to the second."

"No, no," exclaimed Aramis, eagerly, "higher if you please; the one above is the more urgent." They continued their ascent. "Ask the jailer for the keys?" whispered Aramis. Baisemeaux did so, took the keys, and, himself, opened the door of the third room. The jailer was the first to enter; he placed upon the table the provisions, which the kind-hearted governor called dainties, and then left the room. The prisoner had not stirred; Baisemeaux then entered, while Aramis remained at the threshold, from which place he saw a youth about eighteen years of age, who, raising his head at the unusual noise, jumped off the bed, as he perceived the governor, and clasping his hands together, began to cry out, "My mother, my mother," in tones which betrayed such deep distress that Aramis, despite his command over himself, felt a shudder pass through his frame. "My dear boy," said Baisemeaux, endeavoring to smile, "I have brought you a diversion and an extra,—the one for the mind, the other for the body; this gentleman has come to take your measure, and here are some preserves for your dessert."

"Oh, monsieur," exclaimed the young man, "keep me in solitude for a year, let me have nothing but bread and water for a year, but tell me that at the end of a year I shall leave this place, tell me that at the end of a year I shall see my mother again."

"But I have heard you say that your mother was very poor, and that you were very badly lodged when you were living with her, while here—upon my word!"

"If she were poor, monsieur, the greater reason to restore her only means of support to her. Badly lodged with her! oh, monsieur, every one is always well lodged when he is free."

"At all events, since you yourself admit you have done nothing but write that unhappy distich——"

"But without any intention, I swear. Let me be punished,—cut off the hand which wrote it, I will work with the other—but restore my mother to me."

"My boy," said Baisemeaux, "you know very well that it does not depend upon me; all I can do for you is to increase your rations, give you a glass of port wine now and then, slip in a biscuit for you between a couple of plates."

"Great heaven!" exclaimed the young man, falling backward and rolling on the ground.

Aramis, unable to bear this scene any longer, withdrew as far as the landing. "Unhappy, wretched man," he murmured.

"Yes, monsieur, he is indeed very wretched," said the jailer; "but it is his parents' fault."

"In what way?"

"No doubt. Why did they let him learn Latin? Too much knowledge you see; it is that which does harm. Now I, for instance, can't read or write, and therefore I am not in prison." Aramis looked at the man, who seemed to think that being a jailer in the Bastille was not being in prison. As for Baisemeaux, noticing the little effect

produced by his advice and his port wine, he left the dungeon quite upset. "You have forgotten to close the door," said the jailer.

"So I have," said Baisemeaux; "there are the keys, do you do it."

"I will solicit the pardon of that poor boy," said Aramis.

"And if you do not succeed," said Baisemeaux, "at least beg that he may be transferred to the ten-franc list, by which both he and I shall be gainers."

"If the other prisoner calls out for his mother in a similar manner," said Aramis, "I prefer not to enter at all, but will take my measure from outside."

"No fear of that, monsieur architect, the one we are now going to see is as gentle as a lamb; before he could call after his mother he must open his lips, and he never says a word."

"Let us go in, then," said Aramis, gloomily.

"Are you the architect of the prisons, monsieur?" said the jailer.

"I am."

"It is odd, then, that you are not more accustomed to all this."

—Aramis perceived that, to avoid giving rise to any suspicions he must summon all his strength of mind to his assistance. Baisemeaux, who carried the keys, opened the door. "Stay outside," he said to the jailer, "and wait for us at the bottom of the steps." The jailer obeyed and withdrew.

Baisemeaux entered first, and opened the second door himself. By the light which filtered through the iron-barred window, could be seen a handsome young man, short in stature, with closely cut hair, and a beard beginning to grow; he was sitting on a stool, his elbow resting on an armchair, and all the upper part of his body reclining against it. His dress, thrown upon the bed, was of rich

black velvet, and he inhaled the fresh air which blew in upon his breast through a shirt of the very finest cambric. As the governor entered, the young man turned his head with a look full of indifference; and on recognizing Baisemeaux, he arose and saluted him courteously. But when his eyes fell upon Aramis, who remained in the background, the latter trembled, turned pale, and his hat, which he held in his hand, fell upon the ground, as if all his muscles had become relaxed at once. Baisemeaux, habituated to the presence of his prisoner, did not seem to share any of the sensations which Aramis experienced, but, with all the zeal of a good servant, he busied himself in arranging on the table the pasty and crawfish he had brought with him. Occupied in this manner, he did not remark how disturbed his guest had become. When he had finished, however, he turned to the young prisoner and said, "You are looking very well,—are you so?"

"Quite well, I thank you, monsieur," replied the young man.

The effect of the voice was such as almost to overpower Aramis, and notwithstanding his control over himself, he advanced a few steps towards him, with his eyes wide open, and his lips trembling. The movement he made was so marked that Baisemeaux, notwithstanding his pre-occupation, observed it. "This gentleman is an architect who has come to examine your chimney," said Baisemeaux; "does it smoke?"

"Never, monsieur."

"You were saying just now," said the governor, rubbing his hands together, "that it was not possible for a man to be happy in prison; here, however, is one who is so. You have nothing to complain of, I hope?"

"Nothing."

"Do you ever feel weary?" said Aramis.

"Never."

"Ha, ha," said Baisemeaux, in a low tone of voice; "was I right?"

"Well, my dear governor, it is impossible not to yield to evidence. Is it allowed to put any question to him?"

"As many as you like."

"Very well; be good enough to ask him if he knows why he is here."

"This gentleman requests me to ask you," said Baisemeaux, "if you are aware of the cause of your imprisonment?"

"No, monsieur," said the young man, unaffectedly, "I am not."

"That is hardly possible," said Aramis, carried away by his feelings in spite of himself; "if you were really ignorant of the cause of your detention, you would be furious."

"I was so during the early days of my imprisonment."

"Why are you not so now?"

"Because I have reflected."

"That is strange," said Aramis.

"Is it not odd?" said Baisemeaux.

"May one venture to ask you, monsieur, on what you have reflected?"

"I felt that as I had committed no crime, Heaven could not punish me."

"What is a prison, then," inquired Aramis, "if it be not a punishment?"

"Alas! I cannot tell," said the young man: "all that I can tell you now is the very opposite of what I felt seven years ago."

"To hear you converse, to witness your resignation, one might almost believe that you liked your imprisonment?"

"I endure it."

"In the certainty of recovering your freedom some day, I suppose?"

"I have no certainty ; hope I have, and that is all ; and yet I acknowledge that this hope becomes less every day."

"Still, why should you not again be free, since you have already been so?"

"That is precisely the reason," replied the young man, "which prevents me expecting liberty ; why should I have been imprisoned at all if it had been intended to release me afterwards?"

"How old are you?"

"I do not know."

"What is your name?"

"I have forgotten the name by which I was called."

"Who are your parents?"

"I never knew them."

"But those who brought you up?"

"They did not call me their son."

"Did you ever love any one before coming here?"

"I loved my nurse, and my flowers."

"Was that all?"

"I also loved my valet."

"Do you regret your nurse and your valet?"

"I wept very much when they died."

"Did they die since you have been here, or before you came?"

"They died the evening before I was carried off."

"Both at the same time?"

"Yes, both at the same time."

"In what manner were you carried off?"

"A man came for me, directed me to get into a carriage, which was closed and locked, and brought me here."

"Would you be able to recognize that man again?"

"He was masked."

"Is not this an extraordinary tale?" said Baisemeaux, in a low tone of voice, to Aramis, who could hardly breathe.

"It is indeed extraordinary," he murmured.

"But what is still more extraordinary is, that he has never told me so much as he has just told you."

"Perhaps the reasons may be that you have never questioned him," said Aramis.

"It's possible," replied Baisemeaux; "I have no curiosity. Have you looked at the room; it's a fine one, is it not?"

"Very much so."

"A carpet——"

"Beautiful."

"I'll wager he had nothing like it before he came here."

"I think so, too." And then again turning towards the young man, he said, "Do you not remember to have been visited at some time or another by a strange lady or gentleman?"

"Yes, indeed; thrice by a woman, who each time came to the door in a carriage, and entered covered with a veil, which she raised when we were together, and alone."

"Do you remember that woman?"

"Yes."

- "What did she say to you?"

The young man smiled mournfully, and then replied, "She inquired, as you have just done, if I were happy, and if I were getting weary?"

"What did she do on arriving, and on leaving you?"

"She pressed me in her arms, held me in her embrace, and kissed me."

"Do you remember her?"

"Perfectly."

"Do you recall her features distinctly?"

"Yes."

"You would recognize her, then, if accident brought her before you, or led you into her presence?"

"Most certainly."

A flush of fleeting satisfaction passed across Aramis's face. At this moment Baisemeaux heard the jailer approaching. "Shall we leave?" he said, hastily, to Aramis.

Aramis, who probably had learnt all that he cared to know, replied, "When you like."

The young man saw them prepare to leave, and saluted them politely. Baisemeaux replied merely by a nod of the head, while Aramis, with a respect, arising perhaps from the sight of such misfortune, saluted the prisoner profoundly. They left the room, Baisemeaux closing the door behind them.

"Well," said Baisemeaux, as they descended the staircase, "what do you think of it all?"

"I have discovered the secret, my dear governor," he said.

"Bah! what is the secret, then?"

"A murder was committed in that house."

"Nonsense."

"But attend; the valet and nurse died the same day."

"Well."

"And by poison. What do you think?"

"That it is very likely to be true."

"What! that that young man is an assassin?"

"Who said that? What makes you think that poor young fellow could be an assassin?"

"The very thing I was saying. A crime was committed in his house," said Aramis "and that was quite sufficient; perhaps he saw the criminals, and it was feared that he might say something."

"The deuce! if I only thought that——"

"Well?"

"I would redouble the surveillance."

"Oh, he does not seem to wish to escape."

"You do not know what prisoners are."

"Has he any books?"

"None; they are strictly prohibited, and under M. de Mazarin's own hand."

"Have you the writing still?"

"Yes my lord; would you like to look at it as you return to take your cloak?"

"I should, for I like to look at autographs."

"Well, then, this one is of the most unquestionable authenticity; there is only one erasure."

"Ah, ah! an erasure; and in what respect?"

"With respect to a figure. At first there was written: 'To be boarded at 50 francs?'"

"As princes of the blood, in fact?"

"But the cardinal must have seen his mistake, you understand; for he canceled the zero, and has added a 1 before the 5. But, by the by——"

"What?"

"You do not speak of the resemblance."

"I do not speak of it, dear M. de Baisemeaux, for a very simple reason—because it does not exist."

"The deuce it doesn't."

"Or, if it does exist, it is only in your own imagination; but, supposing it were to exist elsewhere, I think it would be better for you not to speak about it."

"Really."

"The king, Louis XIV.—you understand—would be excessively angry with you, if he were to learn that you contributed in any way, to spread the report that one of his subjects has the effrontery to resemble him."

"It is true, quite true," said Baisemeaux, thoroughly alarmed; "but I have not spoken of the circumstances to any one but yourself, and you understand, monseigneur, that I perfectly rely on your discretion."

"Oh, be easy."

"Do you still wish to see the note?"

"Certainly."

While engaged in this manner in conversation, they had returned to the governor's apartments; Baisemeaux took from the cupboard of a private register, like the one he had already shown Aramis, but fastened by a lock, the key which opened it, being one of a small bunch of keys which Baisemeaux always carried with him. Then placing the book upon the table, he opened it at the letter "M," and showed Aramis the following note in the column of observations:—"No books at any time, all linen and clothes of the finest and best quality to be procured; no exercise; always the same jailer; no communications with any one. Musical instruments; every liberty and every indulgence, which his welfare may require; to be boarded at 15 francs. M. de Baisemeaux can claim more if the 15 francs be not sufficient."

"Ah," said Baisemeaux, "now I think of it. I shall claim it."

Aramis shut the book. "Yes," he said, "it is indeed M. de Mazarin's handwriting; I recognize it well. Now, my dear governor," he continued, as if this last communication had exhausted his interest, "let us now turn to our own little affairs."

"Well, what time for repayment do you wish me to take? Fix it yourself."

"There need not be any particular period fixed; give me a simple acknowledgment for 150,000 francs."

"When to be made payable?"

"When I require it, but you understand, I shall only wish it when you yourself do."

"Oh, I am quite easy on that score," said Baisemeaux, smiling; "but I have already given you two receipts."

"Which I now destroy," said Aramis; and after having shown the two receipts to Baisemeaux, he destroyed

them. Overcome by so great a mark of confidence, Baisemeaux unhesitatingly wrote out an acknowledgment of a debt of 150,000 francs, payable at the pleasure of the prelate. Aramis, who had, by glancing over the governor's shoulder, followed the pen as he wrote, put the acknowledgment into his pocket without seeming to have read it, which made Baisemeaux perfectly easy. "Now," said Aramis, "you will not be angry with me if I were to carry off one of your prisoners?"

"What do you mean?"

"By obtaining his pardon, of course. Have I not already told you that I took a great interest in poor Seldon?"

"Yes, quite true, you did so."

"Well?"

"That is your affair; do as you think proper. I see you have an open hand, and an arm that can reach a great way."

"Adieu, adieu." And Aramis left, carrying with him the governor's best wishes.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

At the very time M. de Baisemeaux was showing Aramis the prisoners in the Bastille, a carriage drew up at Madame de Bellière's door, and, at that still early hour, a young woman alighted, her head muffled in a silk hood. When the servants announced Madame Vanel to Madame de Bellière, the latter was engaged, or rather was absorbed, in reading a letter, which she hurriedly concealed. She had hardly finished her morning toilette,

her maid being still in the next room. At the name—at the footsteps of Marguerite Vanel, Madame de Bellière ran to meet her. She fancied she could detect in her friend's eyes a brightness which was neither that of health nor of pleasure. Marguerite embraced her, pressed her hands, and hardly allowed her time to speak. "Dearest," she said, "have you forgotten me? Have you quite given yourself up to the pleasures of the court?"

"I have not even seen the marriage *fêtes*."

"What are you doing with yourself, then?"

"I am getting ready to leave for Bellière."

"For Bellière?"

"Yes."

"You are becoming rustic in your tastes, then: I delight to see you so disposed. But you are pale."

"No, I am perfectly well."

"So much the better; I was becoming uneasy about you. You do not know what I have been told."

"People say so many things."

"Yes, but this is very singular."

"How well you know how to excite curiosity, Marguerite."

"Well, I was afraid of vexing you."

"Never; you have yourself always admired me for my evenness of temper."

"Well, then, it is said that—no, I shall never be able to tell you."

"Do not let us talk about it then," said Madame de Bellière, who detected the ill-nature that was concealed by all these prefaces, yet felt the most anxious curiosity on the subject.

"Well, then, my dear marquise, it is said that, for some time past, you no longer continue to regret Monsieur de Bellière as you used to."

"It is an ill-natured report, Marguerite. I do regret, and shall always regret, my husband; but it is now two

years since he died. I am only twenty-eight years old, and my grief at his loss ought not always to control every action and thought of my life. You, Marguerite, who are the model of a wife, would not believe me if I were to say so."

"Why not? Your heart is so soft and yielding," she said, spitefully.

"Yours is so too, Marguerite, and yet I did not perceive that you allowed yourself to be overcome by grief when your heart was wounded." These words were in direct allusion to Marguerite's rupture with the superintendent, and were also a veiled but direct reproach made against her friend's heart.

As if she only awaited this signal to discharge her shaft, Marguerite exclaimed, "Well, Eliza, it is said you are in love." And she looked fixedly at Madame de Bellière, who blushed against her will.

"Women never escape slander," replied the marquise, after a moment's pause.

"No one slanders you, Eliza."

"What!—people say that I am in love, and yet they do not slander me!"

"In the first place, if it be true, it is no slander, but simply a scandal-loving report. In the next place—for you did not allow me to finish what I was saying,—the public does not assert that you have abandoned yourself to this passion. It represents you, on the contrary, as a virtuous but loving woman, defending herself with claws and teeth, shutting yourself up in your own house as in a fortress; in other respects as impenetrable as that of Danaë, notwithstanding Danaë's tower was made of brass."

"You are witty, Marguerite," said Madame de Bellière, angrily.

"You always flatter me, Eliza. In short, however,

you are reported to be incorruptible and unapproachable. You cannot decide whether the world is calumniating you or not;—but what is it you are musing about while I am speaking to you ?”

“ I ? ”

“ Yes ; you are blushing and do not answer me.”

“ I was trying,” said the marquise, raising her beautiful eyes brightened with an indication of growing temper, “ I was trying to discover to what you could possibly have alluded, you who are so learned in mythological subjects in comparing me to Danaë.”

“ You were trying to guess that ? ” said Marguerite, laughing.

“ Yes ; do you not remember that at the convent, when we were solving our problems in arithmetic—ah ! what I have to tell you is learned also, but it is my turn—do you not remember, that if one of the terms were given, we were to find out the other ? Therefore do *you* guess now ? ”

“ I cannot conjecture what you mean.”

“ And yet nothing is more simple.

You pretend that I am in love, do you not ? ”

“ So it is said.”

“ Very well ; it is not said, I suppose, that I am in love with an abstraction. There must surely be a name mentioned in this report.”

“ Certainly, a name is mentioned.”

“ Very well ; it is not surprising, then, that I should try to guess this name, since you do not tell it.”

“ My dear marquise, when I saw you blush, I did not think you would have to spend much time in conjectures.”

“ It was the word Danaë which you used that surprised me. Danaë means a shower of gold, does it not ? ”

“ That is to say that the Jupiter of Danaë changed himself into a shower of gold for her.”

"My lover, then, he whom you assign me——"

"I beg your pardon; I am your friend, and assign you no one."

"That may be; but those who are ill disposed towards me."

"Do you wish to hear the name?"

"I have been waiting this half hour for it."

"Well, then, you shall hear it. Do not be shocked; he is a man high in power."

"Good," said the marquise, as she clenched her hands like a patient at the approach of the knife.

"He is a very wealthy man," continued Marguerite; "the wealthiest, it may be. In a word, it is——"

The marquise closed her eyes for a moment.

"It is the Duke of Buckingham," said Marguerite, bursting into laughter. This perfidy had been calculated with extreme ability; the name that was pronounced, instead of the name which the marquise awaited, had precisely the same effect upon her as the badly sharpened axes, that had hacked, without destroying Messieurs de Chalais and De Thou upon the scaffold. She recovered herself, however, and said, "I was perfectly right in saying you were a witty woman, for you are making the time pass away most agreeably. This joke is a most amusing one, for I have never seen the Duke of Buckingham."

"Never!" said Marguerite, restraining her laughter.

"I have never even left my own house since the duke has been at Paris."

"Oh!" resumed Madame Vanel, stretching out her foot towards a paper which was lying on the carpet near the window; "it is not necessary for people to see each other, since they can write." The marquise trembled, for this paper was the envelope of the letter she was reading as her friend had entered, and was sealed with the superintendent's arms. As she leaned back on the sofa on which

she was sitting, Madame de Bellière covered the paper with the thick folds of her large silk dress, and so concealed it.

"Come, Marguerite, tell me, is it to tell me all these foolish reports that you have come to see me so early in the day!"

"No; I came to see you in the first place, and to remind you of those habits of our earlier days, so delightful to remember, when we used to wander about together at Vincennes, and, sitting beneath an oak, or in some sylvan shade, used to talk of those we loved, and who loved us."

"Do you propose that we should go out together now?"

"My carriage is here, and I have three hours at my disposal."

"I am not dressed yet, Marguerite; but if you wish that we should talk together, we can, without going to the woods of Vincennes, find in my own garden here, beautiful trees, shady groves, a green sward covered with daisies and violets, the perfume of which can be perceived from where we are sitting."

"I regret your refusal, my dear marquise, for I wanted to pour out my whole heart into yours."

"I repeat again, Marguerite, my heart is yours just as much in this room, or beneath the lime-trees in the garden here, as it would be under the oaks in the wood yonder."

"It is not the same thing for me. In approaching Vincennes, marquise, my ardent aspirations approach nearer to that object towards which they have for some days past been directed." The marquise suddenly raised her head. "Are you surprised, then, that I am still thinking of St. Mandé?"

"Of St. Mandé!" exclaimed Madame de Bellière; and the looks of both women met each other like two resistless swords.

"You, so proud!" said the marquise, disdainfully.

"I, so proud!" replied Madame Vanel. "Such is my nature. I do not forgive neglect,—I cannot endure infidelity. When I leave any one who weeps at my abandonment, I feel induced still to love him; but when others forsake me and laugh at their infidelity, I love distractedly.

Madame de Bellière could not restrain an involuntary movement.

"She is jealous," said Marguerite to herself. "Then," continued the marquise, "you are quite enamored of the Duke of Buckingham—I mean of M. Fouquet?" Eliza felt the allusion, and her blood seemed to congeal in her heart. "And you wished to go to Vincennes,—to St. Mandé even?"

"I hardly know what I wished: you would have advised me, perhaps."

"In what respect?"

"You have often done so."

"Most certainly I should not have done so in the present instance, for I do not forgive as you do. I am less loving, perhaps; when my heart has been once wounded, it remains so always."

"But M. Fouquet has not wounded you," said Marguerite Vanel, with the most perfect simplicity.

"You perfectly understand what I mean. M. Fouquet has not wounded me; I do not know of either obligation or injury received at his hands, but you have reason to complain of him. You are my friend, and I am afraid I should not advise you as you would like."

"Ah! you are prejudging the case."

"The sighs you spoke of just now are more than indications."

"You overwhelm me," said the young woman suddenly, as if collecting her whole strength, like a wrestler pre-

paring for a last struggle; "you take only my evil dispositions and my weaknesses into calculation, and do not speak of my pure and generous feelings. If, at this moment, I feel instinctively attracted towards the superintendent, if I even make an advance to him, which, I confess, is very probable, my motive for it is, that M. Fouquet's fate deeply affects me, and because he is, in my opinion, one of the most unfortunate men living."

"Ah!" said the marquise, placing her hand upon her heart, "something new, then, has occurred."

"Do you not know it?"

"I am utterly ignorant of everything about him," said Madame de Bellière with the poignant anguish that suspends thought and speech, and even life itself.

"In the first place, then, the king's favor is entirely withdrawn from M. Fouquet, and conferred on M. Colbert."

"So it is stated."

"It is very clear, since the discovery of the plot of Belle-Isle."

"I was told that the discovery of the fortifications there had turned out to M. Fouquet's honor."

Marguerite began to laugh in so cruel a manner, that Madame de Bellière could at that moment have delightedly plunged a dagger in her bosom. "Dearest," continued Marguerite, "there is no longer any question of M. Fouquet's honor; his safety is concerned. Before three days are past the ruin of the superintendent will be complete."

"Stay," said the marquise, in her turn smiling, "that is going a little too fast."

"I said three days, because I wish to deceive myself with a hope; but probably the catastrophe will be complete within twenty-four hours."

"Why so?"

"For the simplest of all reasons,—that M. Fouquet has no more money."

"In matters of finance, my dear Marguerite, some are without money to-day, who to-morrow can procure millions."

"That might be M. Fouquet's case when he had two wealthy and clever friends who amassed money for him, and wrung it from every possible or impossible source; but those friends are dead."

"Money does not die, Marguerite; it may be concealed, but it can be looked for, bought, and found."

"You see things on the bright side, and so much the better for you. It is really very unfortunate that you are not the Egeria of M. Fouquet: you might now show him the source whence he could obtain the millions which the king asked him for yesterday."

"Millions!" said the marquise, in terror.

"Four,—an even number."

"Infamous!" murmured Madame de Bellière, tortured by her friend's merciless delight.

"M. Fouquet, I should think, must certainly have four millions," she replied, courageously.

"If he has those which the king requires to-day," said Marguerite, "he will not perhaps possess those which the king will demand in a month or so."

"The king will exact money from him again, then?"

"No doubt: and that is my reason for saying that the ruin of poor M. Fouquet is inevitable. Pride will induce him to furnish the money, and when he has no more, he will fall."

"It is true," said the marquise, trembling; "the plan is a bold one; but tell me, does M. Colbert hate M. Fouquet so very much?"

"I think he does not like him. M. Colbert is powerful;

he improves on close acquaintance ; he has gigantic ideas, a strong will, and discretion ; he will rise."

"He will be superintendent?"

"It is probable. Such is the reason, my dear marquise, why I felt myself impressed in favor of that poor man, who once loved, and even adored, me ; and why, when I see him so unfortunate, I forgive his infidelity, which I have reason to believe he also regrets ; and why, moreover, I should not have been disinclined to afford him some consolation, or some good advice ; he would have understood the step I had taken, and would have thought kindly of me for it. It is gratifying to be loved, you know. Men value love more highly when they are no longer blinded by its influence."

The marquise, bewildered, and overcome by these cruel attacks, which had been calculated with the greatest nicety and precision, hardly knew what answer to return ; she even seemed to have lost all power of thought. Her perfidious friend's voice had assumed the most affectionate tone ; she spoke as a woman, but concealed the instincts of a wolf. "Well," said Madame de Bellière, who had a vague hope that Marguerite would cease to overwhelm a vanquished enemy, "why do you not go, and see M. Fouquet?"

"Decidedly, marquise, you have made me reflect. No, it would be unbecoming for me to make the first advance. M. Fouquet no doubt loves me, but he is too proud. I cannot expose myself to an affront . . . besides I have my husband to consider. You tell me nothing?—Very well, I shall consult M. Colbert on the subject." Marguerite rose smilingly, as though to take leave, but the marquise had not the strength to imitate her. Marguerite advanced a few paces, in order that she might continue to enjoy the humiliating grief in which her rival was plunged, and then said, suddenly, "You do not accompany me to

the door, then?" The marquise rose, pale and almost lifeless, without thinking of the envelope, which had occupied her attention so greatly at the commencement of the conversation, and which was revealed at the first step she took. She then opened the door of her oratory, and without even turning her head towards Marguerite Vanel, entered it, closing the door after her. Marguerite said, or rather muttered, a few words, which Madame de Bellière did not even hear. As soon, however, as the marquise had disappeared, her envious enemy, not being able to resist the desire to satisfy herself that her suspicions were well-founded, advanced stealthily towards it like a panther, and seized the envelope. "Ah!" she said, gnashing her teeth, "it was indeed a letter from M. Fouquet she was reading when I arrived," and then darted out of the room. During this interval, the marquise, having arrived behind the rampart, as it were, of her door, felt that her strength was failing her; for a moment she remained rigid, pale and motionless as a statue, and then, like a statue shaken on its base by an earthquake, tottered and fell inanimate on the carpet. The noise of the fall resounded at the same moment as the rolling of Marguerite's carriage leaving the hotel.

CHAPTER XLVI.

MADAME DE BELLIERE'S PLATE.

THE blow had been the more painful on account of its being unexpected. It was some time before the marquise recovered herself; but, once recovered, she began to reflect upon the events so heartlessly announced to her.

She therefore returned, at the risk even of losing her life in the way, to that train of ideas which her relentless friend had forced her to pursue. Treason, then—deep menaces concealed under the semblance of public interest—such were Colbert's maneuvers. A detestable delight at an approaching downfall, untiring efforts to attain this object, means of seduction no less wicked than the crime itself—such were the weapons Marguerite employed. The crooked atoms of Descartes triumphed; to the man without compassion was united a woman without heart. The marquise perceived, with sorrow rather than indignation, that the king was an accomplice in the plot which betrayed the duplicity of Louis XIII., in his advanced age, and the avarice of Mazarin at a period of life when he had not had the opportunity of gorging himself with French gold. The spirit of this courageous woman soon resumed its energy, no longer overwhelmed by indulgence in compassionate lamentations. The marquise was not one to weep when action was necessary, nor to waste time in bewailing a misfortune as long as means still existed of relieving it. For some minutes she buried her face in her cold fingers, and then, raising her head, rang for her attendants with a steady hand, and with a gesture betraying a fixed determination of purpose. Her resolution was taken.

"Is everything prepared for my departure?" she inquired of one of her female attendants who entered.

"Yes, madame; but it was not expected that your ladyship would leave for Bellière for the next few days."

"All my jewels and articles of value, then, are packed up?"

"Yes, madame; but hitherto we have been in the habit of leaving them in Paris. Your ladyship does not generally take your jewels with you into the country."

"But they are all in order, you say?"

"Yes, in your ladyship's own room."

"The gold plate?"

"In the chest."

"And the silver plate?"

"In the great oak closet."

The marquise remained silent for a few moments, and then said calmly, "Let my goldsmith be sent for."

Her attendants quitted the room to execute the order. The marquise, however, had entered her own room, and was inspecting her casket of jewels with the greatest attention. Never, until now, had she bestowed such close attention upon riches in which women take so much pride; never, until now, had she looked at her jewels, except for the purpose of making a selection according to their settings or their colors. On this occasion, however, she admired the size of the rubies and the brilliancy of the diamonds; she grieved over every blemish and every defect; she thought the gold light, and the stones wretched. The goldsmith, as he entered, found her thus occupied. "M. Fauchaux," she said, "I believe you supplied me with my gold service?"

"I did, your ladyship."

"I do not now remember the amount of the account."

"Of the new service, madame, or of that which M. de Bellière presented to you on your marriage? for I have furnished both?"

"First of all, the new one?"

"The covers, the goblets, and the dishes, with their covers, the *eau-épergne*, the ice-pails, the dishes for the preserves, and the tea and coffee urns, cost your ladyship sixty thousand francs."

"No more?"

"Your ladyship thought the account very high."

"Yes, yes; I remember, in fact, that it was dear; but it was the workmanship, I suppose?"

"Yes, madame; the designs, the chasings—all new patterns."

"What proportion of the cost does the workmanship form? Do not hesitate to tell me."

"A third of its value, madame."

"There is the other service, the old one, that which belonged to my husband?"

"Yes, madame; there is less workmanship in that than in the other. Its intrinsic value does not exceed thirty thousand francs."

"Thirty thousand," murmured the marquise. "But M. Fauchaux, there is also the service which belonged to my mother; all that massive plate which I did not wish to part with, on account of the associations connected with it."

"Ah! madame, that would indeed be an excellent resource for those who, unlike your ladyship, might not be in a position to keep their plate. In chasing that, they worked in solid metal. But that service is no longer in fashion. Its weight is its only advantage."

"That is all I care about. How much does it weigh?"

"Fifty thousand livres at the very least. I do not allude to the enormous vases for the buffet, which alone weigh five thousand livres, or ten thousand the pair."

"One hundred and thirty," murmured the marquise. "You are quite sure of your figures, M. Fauchaux?"

"Positive, madame. Besides, there is no difficulty in weighing them."

"The amount is entered in my books."

"Your ladyship is extremely methodical, I am aware."

"Let us now turn to another subject," said Madame de Bellière: and she opened one of her jewel-boxes.

"I recognize these emeralds," said M. Fauchaux; "for it was I who had the setting of them. They are the most

beautiful in the whole court. No, I am mistaken; Madame de Châtillon has the most beautiful set; she had them from Messieurs de Guise; but your set, madame, comes next."

"What are they worth?"

"Mounted?"

"No; supposing I wished to sell them."

"I know very well who would buy them," exclaimed M. Fauchaux.

"That is the very thing I ask. They could be sold, then?"

"All your jewels could be sold, madame. It is well known that you possess the most beautiful jewels in Paris. You are not changeable in your tastes; when you make a purchase, it is of the very best; and what you purchase you do not part with."

"What could these emeralds be sold for, then?"

"A hundred and thirty thousand francs."

The marquise wrote down upon her tablets the amount which the jeweler mentioned. "The ruby necklace?" she said.

"Are they balas-rubies, madame?"

"Here they are."

"They are beautiful—magnificent. I did not know that your ladyship had these stones."

"What is their value?"

"Two hundred thousand francs. The center one is alone worth a hundred thousand."

"I thought so," said the marquise. "As for diamonds, I have them in numbers; rings, necklaces, sprigs, earrings, clasps. Tell me their value, M. Fauchaux."

The jeweler took his magnifying-glass and scales, weighed and inspected them, and silently made his calculations. "These stones," he said, "must have cost your ladyship an income of forty thousand francs."

"You value them at eight hundred thousand francs."

"Nearly so."

"It is about what I imagined—but the settings are not included."

"No, madame; but if I were called upon to sell or to buy, I should be satisfied with the gold of the settings alone as my profit upon the transaction. I should make a good twenty-five thousand francs."

"An agreeable sum."

"Very much so, madame."

"Will you accept that profit, then, on condition of converting the jewels into money?"

"But you do not intend to sell your diamonds, I suppose, madame?" exclaimed the bewildered jeweler.

"Silence, M. Faucheux, do not disturb yourself about that; give me an answer simply. You are an honorable man, with whom my family has dealt for thirty years; you knew my father and mother, whom your own father and mother served. I address you as a friend, will you accept the gold of the settings in return for a sum of ready money to be placed in my hands?"

"Eight hundred thousand francs! it is enormous."

"I know it."

"Impossible to find."

"Not so."

"But reflect, madame, upon the effect which will be produced by the sale of your jewels."

"No one need know it. You can get sets of false jewels made for me, similar to the real. Do not answer a word; I insist upon it. Sell them separately, sell the stones only."

"In that way it is easy. Monsieur is looking out for some sets of jewels as well as single stones for Madame's toilette. There will be a competition for them. I can easily dispose of 600,000 francs' worth to Monsieur. I am certain yours are the most beautiful."

"When can you do so?"

"In less than three days' time."

"Very well, the remainder you will dispose of among private individuals. For the present, make me out a contract of sale, payment to be made in four days."

"I entreat you to reflect, madame; for if you force the sale, you will lose a hundred thousand francs."

"If necessary, I will lose two hundred; I wish everything to be settled this evening. Do you accept?"

"I do, your ladyship. I will not conceal from you that I shall make fifty thousand francs by the transaction."

"So much the better for you. In what way shall I have the money?"

"Either in gold, or in bills of the bank of Lyons, payable at M. Colbert's." •

"I agree," said the marquise, eagerly; "return home and bring the sum in question in notes, as soon as possible."

"Yes, madame, but for Heaven's sake——"

"Not a word, M. Fauchaux. By the by, I was forgetting the silver plate. What is the value of that which I have?"

"Fifty thousand francs, madame."

"That makes a million," said the marquise to herself.

"M. Fauchaux, you will take away with you both the gold and silver plate. I can assign, as a pretext, that I wish it remodeled on patterns more in accordance with my own taste. Melt it down, and return me its value in money, at once."

"It shall be done, your ladyship."

"You will be good enough to place the money in a chest, and direct one of your clerks to accompany the chest, and without my servants seeing him; and order him to wait for me in a carriage."

"In Madame de Fauchaux's carriage?" said the jeweler.

"If you will allow it, and I will call for it at your house."

"Certainly, your ladyship."

"I will direct some of my servants to convey the plate to your house." The marquise rung. "Let the small van be placed at M. Faucheux's disposal," she said. The jeweler bowed and left the house, directing that the van should follow him closely, saying aloud, that the marquise was about to have her plate melted down in order to have other plate manufactured of a more modern style. Three hours afterwards she went to M. Faucheux's house and received from him eight hundred thousand francs in gold inclosed in a chest, which one of the clerks could hardly carry towards Madame Faucheux's carriage—for Madame Faucheux kept her carriage. As the daughter of a president of accounts, she had brought a marriage portion of thirty thousand crowns to her husband, who was syndic of the goldsmiths. These thirty thousand crowns had become very fruitful during twenty years. The jeweler, though a *millionnaire*, was a modest man. He had purchased a substantial carriage, built in 1648, ten years after the king's birth. This carriage, or rather house upon wheels, excited the admiration of the whole quarter in which he resided—it was covered with allegorical paintings, and clouds scattered over with stars. The marquise entered this somewhat extraordinary vehicle, sitting opposite the clerk, who endeavored to put his knees out of the way, afraid even of touching the marquise's dress. It was the clerk, too, who, told the coachman, who was very proud of having a marquise to drive, to take the road to St. Mandé.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE DOWRY.

MONSIEUR FAUCHEUX's horses were serviceable animals, with thickset knees, and legs they had some difficulty in moving. Like the carriage, they belonged to the earlier part of the century. They were not as fleet as the English horses of M. Fouquet, and consequently took two hours to get to St. Mandé. Their progress, it might be said, was majestic. Majesty, however, precludes hurry. The marquise stopped the carriage at the door so well known to her, although she had seen it only once, under circumstances, it will be remembered, no less painful than those which brought her now to it again. She drew a key from her pocket, and inserted it in the lock, pushed open the door, which noiselessly yielded to her touch, and directed the clerk to carry the chest upstairs to the first floor. The weight of the chest was so great that the clerk was obliged to get the coachman to assist him with it. They placed it in a small cabinet, anteroom, or boudoir rather, adjoining the saloon where we once saw M. Fouquet at the marquise's feet. Madame de Bellière gave the coachman a louis, smiled gracefully at the clerk, and dismissed them both. She closed the door after them, and waited in the room, alone and barricaded. There was no servant to be seen about the rooms, but everything was prepared as though some invisible genius had divined the wishes and desires of an expected guest. The fire was laid, candles in the candelabra, refreshments upon the table, books scattered about, fresh-cut flowers in the vases. One might almost have imagined it an enchanted house.

The marquise lighted the candles, inhaled the perfume of the flowers, sat down, and was soon plunged in profound thought. Her deep musings, melancholy though they were, were not untinged with a certain vague joy. Spread out before her was a treasure, a million wrung from her fortune as a gleaner plucks the blue corn-flower from her crown of flowers. She conjured up the sweetest dreams. Her principal thought, and one that took precedence of all others, was to devise means of leaving this money for M. Fouquet without his possibly learning from whom the gift had come. This idea, naturally enough, was the first to present itself to her mind. But although, on reflection, it appeared difficult to carry out, she did not despair of success. She would then ring to summon M. Fouquet and make her escape, happier than if, instead of having given a million, she had herself found one. But, being there, and having seen the boudoir so coquettishly decorated that it might almost be said the least particle of dust had but the moment before been removed by the servants; having observed the drawing-room, so perfectly arranged that it might almost be said her presence there had driven away the fairies who were its occupants, she asked herself if the glance or gaze of those whom she had displaced—whether spirits, fairies, elves, or human creatures,—had not already recognized her. To secure success, it was necessary that some steps should be seriously taken, and it was necessary also that the superintendent should comprehend the serious position in which he was placed, in order to yield compliance with the generous fancies of a woman; all the fascinations of an eloquent friendship would be required to persuade him, and, should this be insufficient, the maddening influence of a devoted passion, which, in its resolute determination to carry conviction, would not be turned aside. Was not the superintendent, indeed, known for his delicacy and dignity of feeling?

Would he allow himself to accept from any woman that of which she had stripped herself? No! He would resist, and if any voice in the world could overcome his resistance, it would be the voice of the woman he loved.

Another doubt, and that a cruel one, suggested itself to Madame de Bellière with a sharp, acute pain, like a dagger thrust. Did he really love her? Would that volatile mind, that inconstant heart, be likely to be fixed for a moment, even were it to gaze upon an angel? Was it not the same with Fouquet, notwithstanding his genius and his uprightness of conduct, as with those conquerors on the field of battle who shed tears when they have gained a victory? "I must learn if it be so, and must judge of that for myself," said the marquise. "Who can tell whether that heart, so coveted, is not common in its impulses, and full of alloy? Who can tell if that mind, when the touchstone is applied to it, will not be found of a mean and vulgar character? Come, come," she said, "this is doubting and hesitating too much—to the proof." She looked at the timepiece. "It is now seven o'clock," she said; "he must have arrived; it is the hour for signing his papers." With a feverish impatience she rose and walked towards the mirror, in which she smiled with a resolute smile of devotedness; she touched the spring and drew out the handle of the bell. Then, as if exhausted beforehand by the struggle she had just undergone, she threw herself on her knees, in utter abandonment, before a large couch, in which she buried her face in her trembling hands. Ten minutes afterwards she heard the spring of the door sound. The door moved upon invisible hinges, and Fouquet appeared. He looked pale, and seemed bowed down by the weight of some bitter reflection. He did not hurry, but simply came at the summons. The preoccupation of his mind must indeed have been very great, that a man, so devoted to pleasure, for whom

indeed pleasure meant everything, should obey such a summons so listlessly. The previous night, in fact, fertile in melancholy ideas, had sharpened his features, generally so noble in their indifference of expression, and had traced dark lines of anxiety around his eyes. Handsome and noble he still was, and the melancholy expression of his mouth, a rare expression with men, gave a new character to his features, by which his youth seemed to be renewed. Dressed in black, the lace in front of his chest much disarranged by his feverishly restless hand, the looks of the superintendent, full of dreamy reflection, were fixed upon the threshold of the room which he had so frequently approached in search of expected happiness. This gloomy gentleness of manner, this smiling sadness of expression, which had replaced his former excessive joy, produced an indescribable effect upon Madame de Bellière, who was regarding him at a distance.

A woman's eye can read the face of the man she loves, its every feeling of pride, its every expression of suffering; it might almost be said that Heaven has graciously granted to women, on account of their very weakness, more than it has accorded to other creatures. They can conceal their own feelings from a man, but from them no man can conceal his. The marquise divined in a single glance the whole weight of the unhappiness of the superintendent. She divined a night passed without sleep, a day passed in deceptions. From that moment she was firm in her own strength, and she felt that she loved Fouquet beyond everything else. She rose and approached him, saying, "You wrote to me this morning to say you were beginning to forget me, and that I, whom you had not seen lately, had no doubt ceased to think of you. I have come to undeceive you, monsieur, and the more completely so, because there is one thing I can read in your eyes."

"What is that, madame?" said Fouquet, astonished.

"That you have never loved me so much as at this moment; in the same manner you can read, in my present step towards you, that I have not forgotten you."

"Oh! madame," said Fouquet, whose face was for a moment lighted up by a sudden gleam of joy, "you are indeed an angel, and no man can suspect you. All he can do is to humble himself before you, and entreat forgiveness."

"Your forgiveness is granted, then," said the marquise. Fouquet was about to throw himself upon his knees. "No, no," she said, "sit here by my side. Ah! that is an evil thought which has just crossed your mind."

"How do you detect it, madame?"

"By the smile that has just marred the expression of your countenance. Be candid, and tell me what your thought was—no secrets between friends."

"Tell me, then, madame, why have you been so harsh these three or four months past?"

"Harsh?"

"Yes; did you not forbid me to visit you?"

"Alas!" said Madame de Bellière, sighing, "because your visit to me was the cause of your being visited with a great misfortune; because my house is watched; because the same eyes that have seen you already might see you again; because I think it less dangerous for you that I should come here than that you should come to my house; and, lastly, because I know you to be already unhappy enough not to wish to increase your unhappiness further."

Fouquet started, for these words recalled all the anxieties connected with his office of superintendent,—he who, for the last few minutes, had indulged in all the wild aspirations of the lover. "I unhappy?" he said, endeavoring to smile: "indeed, marquise, you will almost make me believe I am so, judging from your own sadness.

Are your beautiful eyes raised upon me merely in pity?—I was looking for another expression from them.”

“It is not I who am sad, monsieur : look in the mirror, there—it is yourself.”

“It is true I am somewhat pale, marquise; but it is from overwork; the king yesterday required a supply of money from me.”

“Yes, four millions : I am aware of it.”

“You know it?” exclaimed Fouquet, in a tone of surprise; “how can you have learnt it? It was after the departure of the queen, and in the presence of one person only, that the king——”

“You perceive that I do know it; is not that sufficient? Well, go on, monsieur, the money the king has required you to supply——”

“You understand, marquise, that I have been obliged to procure it, then to get it counted, afterwards registered,—altogether a long affair. Since Monsieur de Mazarin’s death, financial affairs occasion some little fatigue and embarrassment. My administration is somewhat over-taxed, and this is the reason why I have not slept during the past night.”

“So that you have the amount?” inquired the marquise, with some anxiety.

“It would indeed be strange, marquise,” replied Fouquet, cheerfully, “if a superintendent of finances were not to have a paltry four millions in his coffers.”

“Yes, yes, I believe you either have, or will have them.”

“What do you mean by saying I shall have them?”

“It is not very long since you were required to furnish two millions.”

“On the contrary, to me it seems almost an age; but do not let us talk of money matters any longer.”

“On the contrary, we will continue to speak of them, for that is my only reason for coming to see you.”

"I am at a loss to compass your meaning," said the superintendent, whose eyes began to express an anxious curiosity.

"Tell me, monsieur, is the office of superintendent a permanent position?"

"You surprise me, marchioness, for you speak as if you had some motive or interest in putting the question."

"My reason is simple enough; I am desirous of placing some money in your hands, and naturally I wish you to know if you are certain of your post."

"Really marquise, I am at a loss what to reply: I cannot conceive your meaning."

"Seriously then, dear M. Fouquet, I have certain funds which somewhat embarrass me. I am tired of investing my money in land, and am anxious to intrust it to some friend who will turn it to account."

"Surely it does not press," said M. Fouquet.

"On the contrary, it is very pressing."

"Very well, we will talk of that by and by."

"By and by will not do, for my money is there," returned the marquise, pointing out the coffer to the superintendent, and showing him, as she opened it, the bundles of notes and heaps of gold. Fouquet, who had risen from his seat at the same moment as Madame de Bellière, remained for a moment plunged in thought; then suddenly starting back, he turned pale, and sank down in his chair, concealing his face in his hands. "Madame, madame," he murmured, "what opinion can you have of me when you make me such an offer?"

"Of you!" returned the marquise. "Tell me rather, what you yourself think of the step I have taken."

"You bring me this money for myself, and you bring it because you know me to be embarrassed. Nay, do not deny it, for I am sure of it. Can I not read your heart?"

"If you know my heart, then, can you not see that it is my heart I offer you."

"I have guessed rightly, then," exclaimed Fouquet. "In truth, madame, I have never yet given you the right to insult me in this manner."

"Insult you," she said, turning pale, "what singular delicacy of feeling! You tell me you love me; in the name of that affection you wish me to sacrifice my reputation and my honor, yet, when I offer you money which is my own, you refuse me."

"Madame, you are at liberty to preserve what you term your reputation and your honor. Permit me to preserve mine. Leave me to my ruin, leave me to sink beneath the weight of the hatreds which surround me, beneath the faults I have committed, beneath the load even of my remorse, but, for Heaven's sake, madame, do not overwhelm me with this last infliction."

"A short time since, M. Fouquet, you were wanting in judgment, now you are wanting in feeling."

Fouquet, pressed his clenched hand upon his breast, heaving with emotion, saying "Overwhelm me, madame, for I have nothing to reply."

"I offered you my friendship, M. Fouquet."

"Yes, madame, and you limited yourself to that."

"And what I am now doing is the act of a friend."

"No doubt it is."

"And you reject this mark of my friendship?"

"I do reject it."

"Monsieur Fouquet, look at me," said the marquise, with glistening eyes, "I now offer you my love."

"Oh, madame," exclaimed Fouquet.

"I have loved you for a long while past: women, like men, have a false delicacy at times. For a long time past I have loved you, but would not confess it. Well, then, you have implored this love on your knees, and I have

refused you ; I was blind, as you were a little while since ; but as it was my love that you sought, it is my love I now offer you."

" Oh ! madame, you overwhelm me beneath a load of happiness."

" Will you be happy, then, if I am yours—entirely ? "

" It will be the supremest happiness for me."

" Take me, then. If, however, for your sake I sacrifice a prejudice, do you, for mine, sacrifice a scruple."

" Do not tempt me."

" Do not refuse me."

" Think seriously of what you are proposing."

" Fouquet, but one word. Let it be No, and I open this door," and she pointed to the door which led into the streets, " and you will never see me again. Let that word be Yes, and I am yours entirely."

" Elise ! Elise ! But this coffer ? "

" Contains my dowry."

" It is your ruin," exclaimed Fouquet, turning over the gold and papers, " there must be a million here."

" Yes, my jewels, for which I care no longer if you do not love me, and for which, equally, I care no longer if you love me as I love you."

" This is too much," exclaimed Fouquet. " I yield, I yield, even were it only to consecrate so much devotion. I accept the dowry."

" And take the woman with it," said the marquise, throwing herself into his arms.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

LE TERRAIN DE DIEU.

DURING the progress of these events Buckingham and De Wardes traveled in excellent companionship, and made the journey from Paris to Calais in undisturbed harmony together. Buckingham had hurried his departure, so that the greater part of his *adieux* were very hastily made. His visit to Monsieur and Madame, to the young queen, and to the queen-dowager, had been paid collectively—a precaution on the part of the queen-mother, which saved him the distress of any private conversation with Monsieur, and also the danger of seeing Madame again. The carriages containing the luggage had already been sent on beforehand, and in the evening he set off in his traveling carriage with his attendants.

De Wardes, irritated at finding himself dragged away, in so abrupt a manner, by this Englishman, had sought in his subtle mind for some means of escaping from his fetters; but no one having rendered him any assistance in this respect he was absolutely obliged, therefore, to submit to the burden of his own evil thoughts and caustic spirit.

Such of his friends in whom he had been able to confide, had, in their character of wits, rallied him upon the duke's superiority. Others, less brilliant, but more sensible, had reminded him of the king's orders prohibiting dueling. Others, again, and they the larger number, who, in virtue of charity, or national vanity, might have rendered him assistance, did not care to run the risk of incurring disgrace, and

would, at the best, have informed the ministers of a departure which might end in a massacre on a small scale. The result was, that, after having fully deliberated upon the matter, De Wardes packed up his luggage, took a couple of horses, and, followed only by one servant, made his way towards the barrier, where Buckingham's carriage was to await him.

The duke received his adversary as he would have done an intimate acquaintance, made room beside him on the same seat with himself, offered him refreshments, and spread over his knees the sable cloak that had been thrown on the front seat. They then conversed of the court, without alluding to Madame; of Monsieur, without speaking of domestic affairs; of the king, without speaking of his brother's wife; of the queen-mother, without alluding to her daughter-in-law, of the king of England, without alluding to his sister-in-law; of the state of the affections of either of the travelers, without pronouncing any name that might be dangerous. In this way the journey, which was performed by short stages, was most agreeable, and Buckingham, almost a Frenchman, from wit and education, was delighted at having so admirably selected his traveling companion. Elegant repasts were served, of which they partook but lightly; trials of horses made in the beautiful meadows that skirted the road; coursing indulged in, for Buckingham had his greyhounds with him; and in such ways did they pass away the pleasant time. The duke somewhat resembled the beautiful river Seine, which folds France a thousand times in its loving embrace, before deciding upon joining its waters with the ocean. In quitting France, it was her recently adopted daughter he had brought to Paris whom he chiefly regretted; his every thought was a remembrance of her—his every memory, a regret. Therefore, whenever, now and then, despite his command over himself, he was lost

in thought, De Wardes left him entirely to his musings. This delicacy might have touched Buckingham, and changed his feelings toward De Wardes, if the latter, while preserving silence, had shown a glance less full of malice, and a smile less false. Instinctive dislikes, however, are relentless ; nothing appeases them ; a few ashes may sometimes, apparently, extinguish them ; but beneath those ashes, the smothered embers rage more furiously. Having exhausted every means of amusement the route offered, they arrived, as we have said, at Calais, towards the end of the sixth day. The duke's attendants, since the previous evening, had travelled in advance, and now chartered a boat, for the purpose of joining the yacht, which had been tacking about in sight, or bore broadside on, whenever it felt its white wings wearied, within cannon-shot of the jetty.

The boat was destined for the transport of the duke's equipages from the shore to the yacht. The horses had been embarked, having been hoisted from the boat upon the deck in baskets, expressly made for the purpose, and wadded in such a manner that their limbs, even in the most violent fits of terror or impatience, were always protected by the soft support which the sides afforded, and their coats not even turned. Eight of these baskets, placed side by side, filled the ship's hold. It is well known that, in short voyages, horses refuse to eat, but remain trembling all the while, with the best of food before them, such as they would have greatly coveted on land. By degrees, the duke's entire equipage was transported on board the yacht ; he was then informed that everything was in readiness, and that they only waited for him, whenever he would be disposed to embark with the French gentleman. For no one could possibly imagine that the French gentleman would have any other accounts to settle with his grace than those of friendship. Buck-

ingham desired the captain to be told to hold himself in readiness, but that, as the sea was beautiful, and as the day promised a splendid sunset, he did not intend to go on board until nightfall, and would avail himself of the evening to enjoy a walk on the strand. He added also, that, finding himself in such excellent company, he had not the least desire to hasten his embarkation.

As he said this he pointed out to those who surrounded him the magnificent spectacle which the sky presented, of deepest azure in the horizon, the amphitheater of fleecy clouds ascending from the sun's disc to the zenith, assuming the appearance of a range of snowy mountains, whose summits were heaped one upon another. The dome of clouds was tinged at its base with, as it were, the foam of rubies, fading away into opal and pearly tints, in proportion as the gaze was carried from base to summit. The sea was gilded with the same reflection, and, upon the crest of every sparkling wave danced a point of light, like a diamond by lamplight. The mildness of the evening, the sea breezes, so dear to contemplative minds, setting in from the east and blowing in delicious gusts; then, in the distance, the black outline of the yacht with its rigging traced upon the empurpled background of the sky—while, dotting the horizon, might be seen, here and there, vessels with their trimmed sails, like the wings of a sea-gull about to plunge: such a spectacle indeed, well merited admiration. A crowd of curious idlers followed the richly dressed attendants, amongst whom they mistook the steward and the secretary for the master and his friend. As for Buckingham, who was dressed very simply, in a gray satin vest, and doublet of violet-colored velvet, wearing his hat thrust over his eyes, and without orders or embroidery, he was taken no more notice of than De Wardes, who was in black, like an attorney.

The duke's attendants had received directions to have

a boat in readiness at the jetty head, and to watch the embarkation of their master, without approaching him until either he or his friend should summon them,—“whatever may happen,” he had added, laying a stress upon these words, so that they might not be misunderstood. Having walked a few paces upon the strand, Buckingham said to De Wardes. “I think it is now time to take leave of each other. The tide, you perceive, is rising; ten minutes hence it will have soaked the sands where we are now walking in such a manner that we shall not be able to keep our footing.”

“I await your orders, my lord, but——”

“But, you mean, we are still upon soil which is part of the king’s territory.”

“Exactly.”

“Well, do you see yonder a kind of little island surrounded by a circle of water? the pool is increasing every minute, and the isle is gradually disappearing. This island, indeed, belongs to heaven, for it is situated between two seas, and is not shown on the king’s charts. Do you observe it?”

“Yes; but we can hardly reach it now, without getting our feet wet.”

“Yes; but observe that it forms an eminence tolerably high, and that the tide rises on every side, leaving the top free. We shall be admirably placed upon that little theatre. What do you think of it?”

“I shall be perfectly happy wherever I may have the honor of crossing my sword with your lordship’s.”

“Very well, then, I am distressed to be the cause of your wetting your feet, M. de Wardes, but it is most essential you should be able to say to the king, ‘Sire, I did not fight upon your majesty’s territory.’ Perhaps the distinction is somewhat subtle, but, since Port-Royal, your nation delights in subtleties of expression. Do not

let us complain of this, however, for it makes your wit very brilliant, and of a style peculiarly your own. If you do not object, we will hurry ourselves, for the sea, I perceive, is rising fast, and night is setting in."

"My reason for not walking faster was, that I did not wish to precede your grace. Are you still on dry land, my lord?"

"Yes, at present I am. Look yonder! my servants are afraid we shall be drowned, and have converted the boat into a cruiser. Do you remark how curiously it dances upon the crests of the waves? But, as it makes me feel sea-sick, would you permit me to turn my back towards them?"

"You will observe, my lord, that in turning your back to them, you will have the sun full in your face."

"Oh, its rays are very feeble at this hour and it will soon disappear; do not be uneasy on that score."

"As you please, my lord: it was out of consideration for your lordship that I made the remark."

"I am aware of that, M. de Wardes, and I fully appreciate your kindness. Shall we take off our doublets?"

"As you please, my lord."

"Do not hesitate to tell me, M. de Wardes, if you do not feel comfortable upon the wet sand, or if you think yourself a little too close to the French territory. We could fight in England, or even upon my yacht."

"We are exceedingly well placed here, my lord; only I have the honor to remark that, as the sea is rising fast, we have hardly time——"

Buckingham made a sign of assent, took off his doublet and threw it on the ground, a proceeding which De Wardes imitated. Both their bodies, which seemed like phantoms to those who were looking at them from the shore, were thrown strongly into relief by a dark red

violet-colored shadow with which the sky became over-spread.

"Upon my word, your grace," said De Wardes, "we shall hardly have time to begin. Do you not perceive how our feet are sinking into the sand?"

"I have sunk up to the ankles," said Buckingham, "without reckoning that the water is even now breaking in upon us."

"It has already reached me. As soon as you please, therefore, your grace," said De Wardes, who drew his sword, a movement imitated by the duke.

"M. de Wardes," said Buckingham, "one final word. I am about to fight you because I do not like you,—because you have wounded me in ridiculing a certain devotional regard I have entertained, and one which I acknowledge that, at this moment, I still retain, and for which I would very willingly die. You are a bad and heartless man, M. de Wardes, and I will do my very utmost to take your life; for I feel assured that, if you survive this engagement, you will, in the future, work great mischief towards my friends. That is all I have to remark, M. de Wardes," continued Buckingham, as he saluted him.

"And I, my lord, have only this to reply to you: I have not disliked you hitherto, but, since you give me such a character, I hate you, and will do all I possibly can to kill you;" and De Wardes saluted Buckingham.

Their swords crossed at the same moment, like two flashes of lightning in a dark night. The swords seemed to seek each other, guessed their position, and met. Both were practiced swordsmen, and the earlier passes were without any result. The night was fast closing in, and it was so dark that they attacked and defended themselves almost instinctively. Suddenly De Wardes felt his sword arrested,—he had just touched Buckingham's

shoulder. The duke's sword sunk, as his arm was lowered.

"You are wounded, my lord," said De Wardes, drawing back a step or two.

"Yes, monsieur, but only slightly."

"Yet you quitted your guard."

"Only from the first effect of the cold steel, but I have recovered."

"Let us go on, if you please." And disengaging his sword with a sinister clashing of the blade, the duke wounded the marquis in the breast.

"A hit?" he said.

"No," cried De Wardes, not moving from his place.

"I beg your pardon, but, observing that your shirt was stained——" said Buckingham.

"Well," said De Wardes furiously, "it is now your turn."

And, with a terrible lunge, he pierced Buckingham's arm, the sword passing between the two bones. Buckingham feeling his right arm paralyzed, stretched out his left, seized his sword, which was about falling from his nerveless grasp, and before De Wardes could resume his guard, he thrust him through the breast. De Wardes tottered, his knees gave way beneath him, and leaving his sword still fixed in the duke's arm, he fell into the water, which was soon crimsoned with a more genuine reflection than that which it had borrowed from the clouds. De Wardes was not dead; he felt the terrible danger that menaced him, for the sea rose fast. The duke, too, perceived the danger. With an effort, and an exclamation of pain, he tore out the blade which remained in his arm, and, turning towards De Wardes, said, "Are you dead, marquis?"

"No," replied De Wardes, in a voice choked by the blood which rushed from his lungs to his throat, "but very near it."

"Well, what is to be done; can you walk?" said Buckingham, supporting him on his knee.

"Impossible," he replied. Then falling down again, said, "Call to your people, or I shall be drowned."

"Hallo! boat there! quick, quick!"

The boat flew over the waves, but the sea rose faster than the boat could approach. Buckingham saw that De Wardes was on the point of being again covered by a wave; he passed his left arm, safe and unwounded, round his body, and raised him up. The wave ascended to his waist, but did not move him. The duke immediately began to carry his late antagonist towards the shore. He had hardly gone ten paces, when a second wave, rushing onwards higher, more furious and menacing than the former, struck him at the height of his chest, threw him over, and buried him beneath the water. At the reflux, however, the duke and De Wardes were discovered lying on the strand. De Wardes had fainted. At this moment, four of the duke's sailors, who comprehended the danger, threw themselves into the sea, and in a moment were close beside him. Their terror was extreme, when they observed how their master became covered with blood, in proportion as the water, with which it was impregnated, flowed towards his knees and feet;—they wished to carry him.

"No, no," exclaimed the duke, "take the marquis on shore first."

"Death to the Frenchman!" cried the English sullenly.

"Wretched knaves!" exclaimed the duke, drawing himself up with a haughty gesture, which sprinkled them with blood, "obey directly! M. de Wardes on shore! M. de Wardes' safety to be looked to first, or I will have you all hanged."

The boat had by this time reached them; the secretary



DE WARDES HAD FAINTED

and steward leaped into the sea, and approached the marquis, who no longer showed any sign of life.

"I commit him to your care, as you value your lives," said the duke. "Take M. de Wardes on shore." They took him in their arms, and carried him to the dry sand, where the tide never rose so high. A few idlers and five or six fishermen had gathered on the shore, attracted by the strange spectacle of two men fighting with the water up to their knees. The fishermen, observing a group of men approaching carrying a wounded man, entered the sea until the water was up to their waists. The English transferred the wounded man to them, at the very moment the latter began to open his eyes again. The salt water and the fine sand had got into his wounds, and caused him the acutest pain. The duke's secretary drew out a purse filled with gold from his pocket, and handed it to the one among those present who appeared of most importance, saying:—"From my master, His Grace the Duke of Buckingham, in order that every possible care may be taken of the Marquis de Wardes."

Then, followed by those who had accompanied him, he returned to the boat, which Buckingham had been enabled to reach with the greatest difficulty, but only after he had seen De Wardes out of danger. By this time it was high tide: embroidered coats, and silk sashes were lost; many hats, too, had been carried away by the waves. The flow of the tide had borne the duke's and De Wardes' clothes to the shore, and De Wardes was wrapped in the duke's doublet, under the belief that it was his own, when the fishermen carried him in their arms towards the town.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THREEFOLD LOVE.

As soon as Buckingham departed, Guiche imagined the coast would be perfectly clear for him without any interference. Monsieur, who no longer retained the slightest feeling of jealousy, and who, besides, permitted himself to be monopolized by the Chevalier de Lorraine, allowed as much liberty and freedom in his house as the most exacting could desire. The king, on his side, who had conceived a strong predilection for his sister-in-law's society, invented a variety of amusements, in quick succession to each other, in order to render her residence in Paris as cheerful as possible, so that in fact, not a day passed without a ball at the Palais-Royal, or a reception in Monsieur's apartments. The king had directed that Fontainebleau should be prepared for the reception of the court, and every one was using his utmost interest to get invited. Madame led a life of incessant occupation, neither her voice nor her pen were idle for a moment. The conversations with De Guiche were gradually assuming a tone of interest which might unmistakably be recognized as the prelude of a deep-seated attachment. When eyes look languishingly while the subject under discussion happens to be colors of materials for dresses; when a whole hour is occupied in analyzing the merits and the perfume of a *sachet* or a flower; there are words in this style of conversation, which every one might listen to, but there are gestures and sighs that every one cannot perceive. After Madame had talked for some time with

De Guiche, she conversed with the king, who paid her a visit regularly every day. They played, wrote verses, or selected mottoes or emblematical devices : this spring was not only the May-tide of nature, it was the youth of an entire people, of which those at court were the head. The king was handsome, young, and of unequalled gallantry. All women were passionately loved by him, even the queen his wife. This mighty monarch was, however, more timid and more reserved than any other person in the kingdom, to such a degree, indeed, that he did not confess his sentiments even to himself. This timidity of bearing restrained him within the limits of ordinary politeness, and no woman could boast of having any preference shown her beyond that shown to others. It might be foretold that the day when his real character would be displayed would be the dawn of a new sovereignty ; but as yet he had not declared himself. M. de Guiche took advantage of this, and constituted himself the sovereign prince of the whole laughter-loving court. It had been reported that he was on the best of terms with Mademoiselle de Montalais ; that he had been assiduously attentive to Mademoiselle de Châtillon ; but now he was not even barely civil to any of the court beauties. He had eyes and ears for one person alone. In this manner, and, as it were, without design, he devoted himself to Monsieur, who had a great regard for him, and kept him as much as possible in his own apartments. Unsociable from natural disposition, he had estranged himself too much previous to the arrival of Madame, but, after her arrival, he did not estrange himself sufficiently. This conduct, which every one had observed, had been particularly remarked by the evil genius of the house, the Chevalier de Lorraine, for whom Monsieur exhibited the warmest attachment because he was of a very cheerful disposition, even in his remarks most full of malice, and because he was never at

a loss how to wile the time away. The Chevalier de Lorraine, therefore, having noticed that he was threatened with being supplanted by De Guiche, resorted to strong measures. He disappeared from the court, leaving Monsieur much embarrassed. The first day of his absence, Monsieur hardly inquired about him, for he had De Guiche with him, and, except the time given to conversation with Madame, his days and nights were rigorously devoted to the prince. On the second day, however, Monsieur, finding no one near him, inquired where the chevalier was. He was told that no one knew.

De Guiche, after having spent the morning in selecting embroideries and fringes with Madame, went to console the prince. But after dinner, as there were some amethysts to be looked at, De Guiche returned to Madame's cabinet. Monsieur was left quite to himself during the time he devoted to dressing and decorating himself; he felt that he was the most miserable of men, and again inquired whether there was any news of the chevalier, in reply to which he was told that no one could tell where the chevalier was to be found. Monsieur, hardly knowing in what direction to inflict his weariness, went to Madame's apartments dressed in his morning-gown. He found a large assemblage of people there, laughing and whispering in every part of the room; at one end, a group of women around one of the courtiers, talking together, amid smothered bursts of laughter; at the other end, Manicamp and Malicorne were being pillaged at cards by Montalais and Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, while two others were standing by, laughing. In another part were Madame, seated upon some cushions on the floor, and De Guiche, on his knees beside her, spreading out a handful of pearls and precious stones, while the princess, with her white and slender fingers pointed out such among them as pleased her the most. Again, in another

corner of the room, a guitar-player was playing some of the Spanish *seguedillas*, to which Madame had taken the greatest fancy ever since she had heard them sung by the young queen with a melancholy expression of voice. But the songs which the Spanish princess had sung with tears in her eyes, the young Englishwoman was humming with a smile that well displayed her beautiful teeth. The cabi-not presented, in fact, the most perfect representation of unrestrained pleasure and amusement. As he entered, Monsieur was struck at beholding so many persons enjoying themselves without him. He was so jealous at the sight that he could not resist exclaiming, like a child, "What! you are amusing yourselves here, while I am sick and tired of being alone!"

The sound of his voice was like a clap of thunder coming to interrupt the warbling of birds under the leafy covert of the trees; a dead silence ensued. De Guiche was on his feet in a moment. Malicorne tried to hide himself behind Montalais. Manicamp stood bolt upright, and assumed a very ceremonious demeanor. The guitar-player thrust his instrument under a table, covering it with a piece of carpet to conceal it from the prince's observation. Madame was the only one who did not move, and smiling at her husband, said, "Is not this the hour you usually devote to your toilette?"

"An hour which others select, it seems, for amusing themselves," replied the prince, grumblingly.

This untoward remark was the signal for a general rout; the women fled like a flock of terrified starlings; the guitar-player vanished like a shadow; Malicorne, still protected by Montalais, who purposely widened out her dress, glided behind the hanging tapestry. As for Manicamp, he went to the assistance of De Guiche, who naturally remained near Madame, and both of them, with the princess herself, courageously sustained the attack. The

count was too happy to bear malice against the husband ; but Monsieur bore a grudge against his wife. Nothing was wanting but a quarrel ; he sought it. And the hurried departure of the crowd, which had been so joyous before he arrived, and was so disturbed by his entrance, furnished him with a pretext.

“Why do they run away at the very sight of me ?” he inquired, in a supercilious tone ; to which remark Madame replied, “that, whenever the master of the house made his appearance, the family kept aloof out of respect.” As she said this, she made so funny and so pretty a grimace, that De Guiche and Manicamp could not control themselves ; they burst into a peal of laughter ; Madame followed their example, and even Monsieur himself could not resist it, and he was obliged to sit down, as for laughing he could scarcely keep his equilibrium. However, he very soon left off, but his anger had increased. He was still more furious because he had permitted himself to laugh, than from having seen others laugh. He looked at Manicamp steadily, not venturing to show his anger towards De Guiche ; but, at a sign which displayed no little amount of annoyance, Manicamp and De Guiche left the room, so that Madame, left alone, began sadly to pick up her pearls and amethysts, no longer smiling, and speaking still less.

“I am very happy,” said the duke, “to find myself treated as a stranger here, madame,” and he left the room in a passion. On his way out, he met Montalais, who was in attendance in the anteroom. “It is very agreeable to pay you a visit here, but outside the door.”

Montalais made a very low obeisance. “I do not quite understand what your royal highness does me the honor to say.”

“I say that when you are all laughing together in Ma-

dame's apartment, he is an unwelcome visitor who does not remain outside."

"Your royal highness does not think, and does not speak so, of yourself?"

"On the contrary, it is on my own account that I do speak and think. I have no reason, certainly, to flatter myself about the receptions I meet with here at any time. How is it that, on the very day there is music and a little society in Madame's apartments—in my own apartments, indeed, for they are mine—on the very day that I wish to amuse myself a little in my turn, every one runs away? Are they afraid to see me, that they all took wing as soon as I appeared? Is there anything wrong, then, going on in my absence?"

"Yet nothing has been done to-day, monseigneur, which is not done every day."

"What! do they laugh like that every day?"

"Why, yes, monseigneur."

"The same group of people simpering and the same singing and strumming going on every day?"

"The guitar, monseigneur, was introduced to-day; but when we have no guitars, we have violins and flutes; ladies soon weary without music."

"The deuce!—and the men?"

"What men, monseigneur?"

"M. de Guiche, M. de Manicamp, and the rest of them?"

"They all belong to your highness's household."

"Yes, yes, you are right," said the prince, as he returned to his own apartments, full of thought. He threw himself into the largest of his arm-chairs, without looking at himself in the glass. "Where can the chevalier be?" said he. One of the prince's attendants happened to be near him, overheard his remark, and replied,—

"No one knows, your highness."

“Still the same answer. The first one who answers me again, ‘I do not know,’ I will discharge.” Every one at this remark hurried out of his apartments, in the same manner as the others had fled from Madame’s apartments. The prince then flew into the wildest rage. He kicked over a chiffonier, which tumbled on the carpet, broken into pieces. He next went into the galleries, and with the greatest coolness threw down one after another, an enameled vase, a porphyry ewer, and a bronze candelabrum. The noise summoned every one to the various doors.

“What is your highness’s pleasure?” said the captain of the guards, timidly.

“I am treating myself to some music,” replied the prince, gnashing his teeth.

The captain of the guards desired his royal highness’s physician to be sent for. But before he came, Malicorne arrived, saying to the prince, “Monseigneur, the Chevalier de Lorraine is here.”

The duke looked at Malicorne, and smiled graciously at him, just as the chevalier entered.

CHAPTER L.

M. DE LORRAINE’S JEALOUSY.

THE Duc d’Orleans uttered a cry of delight on perceiving the Chevalier de Lorraine. “This is fortunate, indeed,” he said; “by what happy chance do I see you? Had you, indeed disappeared, as every one assured me?”

“Yes, monseigneur.”

“A caprice?”

“I to venture upon caprices with your highness! The respect——”

"Put respect out of the way, for you fail in it every day. I absolve you; but why did you leave me?"

"Because I felt that I was of no further use to you.

"Explain yourself."

"Your highness has people about you who are far more amusing than I can ever be. I felt I was not strong enough to enter into contest with them, and I therefore withdrew."

"This extreme diffidence shows a want of common-sense. Who are those with whom you cannot contend? De Guiche?"

"I name no one."

"This is absurd. Does De Guiche annoy you?"

"I do not say he does; do not force me to speak, however; you know very well that De Guiche is one of our best friends."

"Who is it, then?"

"Excuse me, monseigneur, let us say no more about it." The chevalier knew perfectly well that curiosity is excited in the same way as thirst—by removing that which quenches it; or in other words, by denying an explanation.

"No, no," said the prince, "I wish to know why you went away."

"In that case, monseigneur, I will tell you; but do not get angry. I remarked that my presence was disagreeable."

"To whom?"

"To Madame."

"What do you mean?" said the duke in astonishment.

"It is simple enough: Madame is very probably jealous of the regard you are good enough to testify for me."

"Has she shown it to you?"

"Madame never addresses a syllable to me, particularly since a certain time."

"Since *what* time?"

"Since the time when, M. De Guiche having made himself more agreeable to her than I could, she receives him at every and any hour."

The duke colored. "At any hour, chevalier; what do you mean by that?"

"You see, your highness, I have already displeased you; I was quite sure I should."

"I am not displeased; but what you say is rather startling. In what respect does Madame prefer De Guiche to you?"

"I shall say no more," said the chevalier, saluting the prince ceremoniously.

"On the contrary, I require you to speak. If you withdraw on that account, you must indeed be very jealous."

"One cannot help being jealous, monseigneur, when one loves. Is not your royal highness jealous of Madame? Would you not, if you saw some one always near Madame, and always treated with great favor, take umbrage at it? One's friends are as one's lovers. Your highness has sometimes conferred the distinguished honor upon me of calling me your friend."

"Yes, yes: but you used a phrase which has a very equivocal signification; you are unfortunate in your phrases."

"What phrases, monseigneur?"

"You said, 'treated with great favor.' What do you mean by favor?"

"Nothing can be more simple," said the chevalier, with an expression of great frankness: "for instance, whenever a husband remarks that his wife summons such and such a man near her—whenever this man is always to be found by her side, or in attendance at the door of her carriage; whenever the bouquet of the one is always the same color as the ribbons of the other—when music and supper par-

ties are held in private apartments—whenever a dead silence takes place immediately the husband makes his appearance in his wife's rooms—and when the husband suddenly finds that he has, as a companion, the most devoted and the kindest of men, who, a week before, was with him as little as possible; why, then——”

“Well, finish.”

“Why, then, I say, monseigneur, one possibly may get jealous. But all these details hardly apply; for our conversation had nothing to do with them.”

The duke was evidently much agitated, and seemed to struggle within himself a good deal. “You have not told me,” he then remarked, “why you absented yourself. A little while ago you said it was from a fear of intruding; you added, even, that you had observed a disposition on Madame's part to encourage De Guiche.”

“Pardon me, monseigneur, I did not say that.”

“You did, indeed.”

“Well, if I did say so, I observed nothing but what was very inoffensive.”

“At all events, you remarked something.”

“You embarrass me, monseigneur.”

“What does that matter? Answer me. If you speak the truth, why should you feel embarrassed?”

“I always speak the truth, monseigneur; but I also always hesitate when it is a question of repeating what others say.”

“Ah! repeat? It appears that it is talked about then?”

“I acknowledge that others have spoken to me on the subject.”

“Who?” said the prince.

The chevalier assumed almost an angry air, as he replied, “Monseigneur, you are subjecting me to cross-examination; you treat me as a criminal at the bar; the

rumors which idly pass by a gentleman's ears do not remain there. Your highness wishes me to magnify rumor until it attains the importance of an event."

"However," said the duke in great displeasure, "the fact remains that you withdrew on account of this report."

"To speak the truth, others have talked to me of the attentions of M. de Guiche to Madame, nothing more; perfectly harmless, I repeat, and more than that, allowable. But do not be unjust, monseigneur, and do not attach any undue importance to it. It does not concern you."

"M. de Guiche's attentions to Madame do not concern me?"

"No, monseigneur; and what I say to you I would say to De Guiche himself, so little do I think of the attentions he pays Madame. Nay, I would say it even to Madame herself. Only you understand, what I am afraid of—I am afraid of being thought jealous of the favor shown, when I am only jealous as far as friendship is concerned. I know your disposition; I know that when you bestow your affections you become exclusively attached. You love Madame—and who, indeed, would *not* love her? Follow me attentively, as I proceed:—Madame has noticed among your friends the handsomest and most fascinating of them all; she will begin to influence you on his behalf, in such a way that you will neglect the others. Your indifference would kill me; it is already bad enough to have to support Madame's indifference. I have, therefore, made up my mind to give way to the favorite whose happiness I envy, even while I acknowledge my sincere friendship and sincere admiration for him. Well, monseigneur, do you see anything to object to, in this reasoning?" It is not that of a man of honor? Is my conduct that of a sincere friend? Answer me, at least, after having so closely questioned me."

The duke had seated himself, with his head buried in his hands. After a silence, long enough to enable the chevalier to judge of the effect of this oratorical display the duke rose, saying, "Come, be candid."

"As I always am."

"Very well. You know that we already observed something respecting that mad fellow, Buckingham."

"Do not say anything against Madame, monseigneur, or I shall take my leave. It is impossible you can be suspicious of Madame?"

"No, no, chevalier; I do not suspect Madame; but in fact, I observe—I compare——"

"Buckingham was a madman, monseigneur."

"A madman about whom, however, you opened my eyes thoroughly."

"No, no," said the chevalier, quickly; "it was not I who opened your eyes. It was De Guiche. Do not confound us, I beg." And he began to laugh in so harsh a manner that it sounded like the hiss of a serpent.

"Yes, yes; I remember. You said a few words, but De Guiche showed the most jealousy."

"I should think so," continued the chevalier, in the same tone. "He was fighting for home and altar."

"What did you say?" said the duke, haughtily, thoroughly roused by this insidious jest.

"Am I not right? for does not M. de Guiche hold the chief post of honor in your household?"

"Well," replied the duke, somewhat calmed, "had this passion of Buckingham been remarked?"

"Certainly."

"Very well. Do people say that M. de Guiche's is remarked as much?"

"Pardon me, monseigneur; you are again mistaken; no one says that M. de Guiche entertains anything of the sort."

"Very good."

"You see, monseigneur, that it would have been better, a hundred times better, to have left me in my retirement, than to have allowed you to conjure up, by the aid of any scruples I may have had, suspicions which Madame will regard as crimes, and she would be in the right, too."

"What would you do?"

"Act reasonably."

"In what way?"

"I should not pay the slightest attention to the society of these new Epicurean philosophers: and, in that way, the rumors will cease."

"Well, I will see; I will think over it."

"Oh, you have time enough; the danger is not great; and then, besides, it is not a question either of danger or of passion. It all arose from a fear I had to see your friendship for me decrease. From the very moment you restore it, with so kind an assurance of its existence, I have no longer any other idea in my head."

The duke shook his head, as if he meant to say: "If you have no more ideas, I have though." It being now the dinner-hour, the prince sent to inform Madame of it; but she returned a message to the effect that she could not be present, but would dine in her own apartment.

"That is not my fault," said the duke. "This morning having taken them by surprise, in the midst of a musical party, I got jealous; and so they are in the sulks with me."

"We will dine alone," said the chevalier, with a sigh; "I regret De Guiche is not here."

"Oh! De Guiche will not remain long in the sulks; he is a very good-natured fellow."

"Monseigneur," said the chevalier, suddenly, "an excellent idea has struck me, in our conversation just now. I may have exasperated your highness, and caused you some dissatisfaction. It is but fitting that I should be

the mediator. I will go and look for the count, and bring him back with me."

"Ah! chevalier, you are really a very good-natured fellow."

"You say that as if you were surprised."

"Well, you are not so tender-hearted every day."

"That may be; but confess that I know how to repair a wrong I may have done."

"I confess that."

"Will your highness do me the favor to wait here a few minutes?"

"Willingly; be off, and I will try on my Fontainebleau costume."

The chevalier left the room, called his different attendants with the greatest care, as if he was giving them different orders. All went off in various directions; but he retained his *valet de chambre*. "Ascertain, and immediately, too, if M. de Guiche is not in Madame's apartments. How can one learn it?"

"Very easily, monsieur. I will ask Malicorne, who will find out from Mlle. de Montalais. I may as well tell you, however, that the inquiry will be useless; for all M. de Guiche's attendants are gone, and he must have left with them."

"Ascertain, nevertheless."

Ten minutes had hardly passed, when the valet returned. He beckoned his master mysteriously towards the servants' staircase, and showed him into a small room with a window looking out upon the garden. "What is the matter," said the chevalier; "why so many precautions?"

"Look, monsieur," said the valet, "look yonder, under the walnut-tree."

"Ah?" said the chevalier. "I see Manicamp there. What is he waiting for?"

"You will see in a moment, monsieur, if you wait patiently. There, do you see now?"

"I see one, two, four musicians with their instruments, and behind them, urging them on, De Guiche himself. What is he doing there though?"

"He is waiting until the little door of the staircase, belonging to the ladies of honor, is opened; by that staircase he will ascend to Madame's apartments, where some new pieces of music are going to be performed during dinner."

"This is admirable news you tell me."

"Is it not, monsieur?"

"Was it M. de Malicorne who told you this?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"He likes you, then?"

"No, monsieur, it is Monsieur he likes."

"Why?"

"Because he wishes to belong to his household."

"And most certainly he shall. How much did he give you for that?"

"The secret which I now dispose of to you, monsieur."

"And which I buy for a hundred pistoles. Take them."

"Thank you, monsieur. Look, look, the little door opens, a woman admits the musicians."

"It is Montalais."

"Hush, monseigneur; do not call out her name; whoever says Montalais says Malicorne. If you quarrel with the one, you will be on bad terms with the other."

"Very well; I have seen nothing."

"And I," said the valet, pocketing the purse, "have received nothing."

The chevalier, being now certain that Guiche had entered, returned to the prince, whom he found splendidly

dressed and radiant with joy, as with good looks. "I am told," he exclaimed, "that the king has taken the sun as his device; really, monseigneur, it is you whom this device would best suit."

"Where is De Guiche?"

"He cannot be found. He has fled—has evaporated entirely. Your scolding of this morning terrified him. He could not be found in his apartments."

"Bah! the hair-brained fellow is capable of setting off post-haste to his own estates. Poor man! we will recall him. Come, let us dine now."

"Monseigneur, to-day is a very festival of ideas; I have another."

"What is it?"

"Madame is angry with you, and she has reason to be so. You owe her her revenge; go and dine with her."

"Oh! that would be acting like a weak and whimsical husband."

"It is the duty of a good husband to do so. The princess is no doubt wearied enough; she will be weeping in her plate, and her eyes will get quite red. A husband who is the cause of his wife's eyes getting red is an odious creature. Come, monseigneur, come."

"I cannot; for I have directed dinner to be served here."

"Yet see, monseigneur, how dull we shall be; I shall be low-spirited because I know that Madame will be alone; you, hard and savage as you wish to appear, will be sighing all the while. Take me with you to Madame's dinner, and that will be a delightful surprise. I am sure we shall be very merry; you were in the wrong this morning."

"Well, perhaps I was."

"There is no perhaps at all, for it is a fact you were so."

"Chevalier, chevalier, your advice is not good."

"Nay, my advice is good; all the advantages are on your own side. Your violet-colored suit, embroidered with gold, becomes you admirably. Madame will be as much vanquished by the man as by the action. Come, monseigneur."

"You decide me; let us go."

The duke left his room, accompanied by the chevalier, and went towards Madame's apartments. The chevalier hastily whispered to his valet, "Be sure that there are some people before the little door, so that no one can escape in that direction. Run, run." And he followed the duke towards the antechambers of Madame's suit of apartments, and when the ushers were about to announce them, the chevalier said, laughing, "His Highness wishes to surprise Madame."

CHAPTER LI.

MONSIEUR IS JEALOUS OF GUICHE.

MONSIEUR entered the room abruptly, as persons do who mean well and think they confer pleasure, or as those who hope to surprise some secret, the terrible reward of jealous people. Madame, almost out of her senses with joy at the first bars of music, was dancing in the most unrestrained manner, leaving the dinner, which had been already begun, unfinished. Her partner was M. de Guiche, who, with his arms raised, and his eyes half closed, was kneeling on one knee, like the Spanish dancers, with looks full of passion, and gestures of the most caressing character. The princess was dancing round him with a responsive smile, and the same air of alluring seductiveness. Montalais stood by admiringly; La Vallière, seated

in a corner of the room, looked on thoughtfully. It is impossible to describe the effect which the presence of the prince produced upon this gleeful company, and it would be equally impossible to describe the effect which the sight of their happiness produced upon Philip. The Comte de Guiche had no power to move; Madame remained in the middle of one of the figures and of an attitude, unable to utter a word. The Chevalier de Lorraine, leaning his back against the doorway, smiled like a man in the very height of the frankest admiration. The pallor of the prince, and the convulsive twitching of his hands and limbs, were the first symptoms that struck those present. A dead silence succeeded the merry music of the dance. The Chevalier de Lorraine took advantage of this interval to salute Madame and De Guiche most respectfully, affecting to join them together in his reverences as though they were the master and mistress of the house. Monsieur then approached them, saying, in a hoarse tone of voice, "I am delighted: I came here expecting to find you ill and low-spirited, and I find you abandoning yourself to new amusements; really, it is most fortunate. My house is the pleasantest in the kingdom." Then turning towards De Guiche, "Comte," he said, "I did not know you were so good a dancer." And, again addressing his wife, he said, "Show a little more consideration for me, Madame; whenever you intend to amuse yourselves here, invite me. I am a prince, unfortunately, very much neglected."

Guiche had now recovered his self-possession, and with the spirited boldness which was natural to him, and sat so well upon him, he said, "Your Highness knows very well that my very life is at your service, and whenever there is a question of its being needed, I am ready; but to-day, as it is only a question of dancing to music, I dance."

"And you are perfectly right," said the prince, coldly. "But, Madame," he continued, "you do not remark that your ladies deprive me of my friends; M. de Guiche does not belong to you, madame, but to me. If you wish to dine without me you have your ladies. When I dine alone I have my gentlemen; do not strip me of *everything*."

Madame felt the reproach and the lesson, and the color rushed to her face. "Monsieur," she replied, "I was not aware, when I came to the court of France, that princesses of my rank were to be regarded as the women in Turkey are. I was not aware that we were not allowed to be seen; but, since such is your desire, I will conform myself to it; pray do not hesitate, if you should wish it, to have my windows barred, even."

This repartee, which made Montalais and De Guiche smile, rekindled the prince's anger, no inconsiderable portion of which had already evaporated in words.

"Very well," he said, in a concentrated tone of voice, "this is the way in which I am respected in my own house."

"Monseigneur, monseigneur," murmured the chevalier in the duke's ear in such a manner that every one could observe he was endeavoring to calm him.

"Come," replied the prince, as his only answer to the remark, hurrying him away, and turning round with so hasty a movement that he almost ran against Madame. The chevalier followed him to his own apartment, where the prince had no sooner seated himself than he gave free vent to his fury. The chevalier raised his eyes towards the ceiling, joined his hands together, and said not a word.

"Give me your opinion," exclaimed the prince.

"Upon what?"

"Upon what is taking place here."

"Oh, monseigneur, it is a very serious matter."

"It is abominable! I cannot live in this manner."

"How miserable all this is," said the chevalier. "We hoped to enjoy tranquillity after that madman Buckingham had left."

"And this is worse."

"I do not say that, monseigneur."

"Yes, but I say it for Buckingham would never have ventured upon a fourth part of what we have just now seen."

"What do you mean?"

"To conceal oneself for the purpose of dancing, and to feign indisposition in order to dine *tête-à-tête*."

"No, no, monseigneur."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the prince, exciting himself like a self-willed child; "but I will not endure it any longer, I must learn what is really going on."

"Oh, monseigneur, an exposure——"

"By Heaven, monsieur, *shall* I put myself out of the way, when people show so little consideration for me! Wait for me here, chevalier, wait for me here." The prince disappeared in the neighboring apartment and inquired of the gentleman in attendance if the queen-mother had returned from chapel. Anne of Austria felt that her happiness was now complete; peace restored to her family, a nation delighted with the presence of a young monarch, who had shown an aptitude for affairs of great importance; the revenues of the state increased; external peace assured; everything seemed to promise a tranquil future. Her thoughts recurred, now and then, to the poor young nobleman whom she had received as a mother, and had driven away as a hard-hearted step-mother, and she sighed as she thought of him.

Suddenly, the Duc d'Orleans entered her room. "Dear mother," he exclaimed hurriedly, closing the door, "things cannot go on as they are now."

Anne of Austria raised her beautiful eyes towards him, and with an unmoved suavity of manner, said, "What do you allude to?"

"I wish to speak of Madame."

"Your wife?"

"Yes, madame."

"I suppose that silly fellow Buckingham has been writing a farewell letter to her."

"Oh! yes, madame; of course, it is a question of Buckingham."

"Of whom else could it be, then? for that poor fellow was, wrongly enough, the object of your jealousy, and I thought——"

"My wife, madame, has already replaced the Duke of Buckingham."

"Philip, what are you saying? You are speaking very heedlessly."

"No, no. Madame has so managed matters, that I am still jealous."

"Of whom, in Heaven's name?"

"Is it possible you have not remarked it? Have you not noticed that M. de Guiche is always in her apartments—always with her?"

The queen clapped her hands together, and began to laugh. "Philip," she said, "your jealousy is not merely a defect, it is a disease."

"Whether a defect or a disease, madame, I am the sufferer from it."

"And do you imagine that a complaint which exists only in your own imagination can be cured? You wish it to be said you are right in being jealous, when there is no ground whatever for your jealousy."

"Of course, you will begin to say for this gentleman, what you already said on behalf of the other."

"Because, Philip," said the queen, dryly, "what you

did for the other, you are going to do for this one."

The prince bowed, slightly annoyed. "If to give you facts," he said, "will you believe me?"

"If it regarded anything else but jealousy, I would believe you without your bringing facts forward; but, as jealousy is in the case, I promise nothing."

"It is just the same as if your majesty were to desire me to hold my tongue, and sent me away unheard."

"Far from it; as you are my son, I owe you a mother's indulgence."

"Oh, say what you think; you owe me as much indulgence as a madman deserves."

"Do not exaggerate, Philip, and take care how you represent your wife to me as a woman of depraved mind——"

"But facts, mother, facts!"

"Well, I am listening."

"This morning at ten o'clock, they were playing music in Madame's apartments."

"No harm in that, surely."

"M. de Guiche was talking with her alone——Ah! I forgot to tell you, that, during the last ten days, he has never left her side."

"If they were doing any harm they would hide themselves."

"Very good," exclaimed the duke, "I expected you to say that. Pray remember with precision the words you have just uttered. This morning I took them by surprise, and showed my dissatisfaction in a very marked manner."

"Rely upon it, that is quite sufficient; it was perhaps, even a little too much. These young women easily take offense. To reproach them for an error they have not committed is, sometimes, almost equivalent to telling them they might be guilty of even worse."

"Very good, very good; but wait a minute. Do not forget what you just this moment said that this morning's lesson ought to have been sufficient, and that if they had been doing what was wrong, they would have hidden themselves."

"Yes, I said so."

"Well, just now, repenting of my hastiness of the morning, and imagining that Guiche was sulking in his own apartments, I went to pay Madame a visit. Can you guess what, or whom, I found there?—Another set of musicians; more dancing, and Guiche himself—he was concealed there."

Anne of Austria frowned. "It was imprudent," she said. "What did Madame say?"

"Nothing."

"And Guiche?"

"As much—oh, no! he muttered some impertinent remark or another."

"Well, what is your opinion, Philip?"

"That I have been made a fool of; that Buckingham was only a pretext, and that Guiche is the one who is really to blame in the matter."

Anne shrugged her shoulders. "Well," she said, "what else?"

"I wish De Guiche to be dismissed from my household, as Buckingham was, and I shall ask the king, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless you, my dear mother, who are so clever and so kind, will execute the commission yourself."

"I will not do it, Philip."

"What, madame?"

"Listen, Philip; I am not disposed to pay people ill compliments every day; I have some influence over young people, but I cannot take advantage of it without running

the chance of losing it altogether. Besides, there is nothing to prove that M. de Guiche is guilty."

"He has displeased me."

"That is your own affair."

"Very well, I know what I shall do," said the prince, impetuously.

Anne looked at him with some uneasiness. "What do you intend to do?" she said.

"I will have him drowned in my fish-pond the very next time I find him in my apartments again." Having launched this terrible threat, the prince expected his mother would be frightened out of her senses; but the queen was unmoved.

"Do so," she said.

Philip was as weak as a woman, and began to cry out, "Every one betrays me,—no one cares for me; my mother even joins my enemies."

"Your mother, Philip, sees further in the matter than you do, and does not care about advising you, since you will not listen to her."

"I will go to the king."

"I was about to propose that to you. I am now expecting his Majesty: it is the hour he usually pays me a visit; explain the matter to him yourself."

She had hardly finished when Philip heard the door of the anteroom open with some noise. He began to feel nervous. At the sound of the king's footsteps, which could be heard upon the carpet, the duke hurriedly made his escape. Anne of Austria could not resist laughing, and was laughing still when the king entered. He came very affectionately to inquire after the even now uncertain health of the queen-mother, and to announce to her that the preparations for the journey to Fontainebleau was complete. Seeing her laugh, his uneasiness on her account diminished, and he addressed her in a vivacious tone

himself. Anne of Austria took him by the hand, and, in a voice full of playfulness, said "Do you know, sire, that I am proud of being a Spanish woman?"

"Why, madame?"

"Because Spanish women are worth more than English women at least."

"Explain yourself."

"Since your marriage you have not, I believe, had a single reproach to make against the queen."

"Certainly not."

"And you, too, have been married some time. Your brother, on the contrary, has been married but a fortnight."

"Well?"

"He is now finding fault with Madame a second time."

"What, Buckingham still?"

"No, another."

"Who?"

"Guiche."

"Really, Madame is a coquette, then?"

"I fear so."

"My poor brother," said the king, laughing.

"You don't object to coquettes, it seems?"

"In Madame, certainly I do: but Madame is not a coquette at heart."

"That may be, but your brother is excessively angry about it."

"What does he want?"

"He wants to drown Guiche."

"That is a violent measure to resort to."

"Do not laugh; he is extremely irritated. Think of what can be done."

"To save Guiche—certainly."

"Oh, if your brother heard you, he would conspire against you as your uncle did against your father."

"No; Philip has too much affection for me for that, and I, on my side, have too great a regard for him; we shall live together on very good terms. But what is the substance of his request?"

"That you will prevent Madame from being a coquette and Guiche from being amiable."

"Is that all? My brother has an exalted idea of sovereign power. To reform a man, not to speak about reforming a woman!"

"How will you set about it?"

"With a word to Guiche, who is a clever fellow, I will undertake to convince him."

"But Madame?"

"That is more difficult; a word will not be enough. I will compose a homily and read it to her."

"There is no time to be lost."

"Oh, I will use the utmost diligence. There is a repetition of the ballet this afternoon."

"You will read her a lecture while you are dancing?"

"Yes, madame."

"You promise to convert her?"

"I will root out the heresy altogether, either by convincing her, or by extreme measures."

"That is all right, then. Do not mix me up in the affair; Madame would never forgive me all her life, and as a mother-in-law, I ought to desire to live on good terms with my new-found daughter."

"The king, madame, will take all upon himself. But let me reflect."

"What about?"

"It would be better, perhaps, if I were to go and see Madame in her own apartment."

"Would that not seem a somewhat serious step to take?"

"Yes; but seriousness is not unbecoming in preachers,

and the music of the ballet would drown half my arguments. Besides, the object is to prevent any violent measures on my brother's part, so that a little precipitation may be advisable. Is Madame in her own apartment?"

"I believe so."

"What is my statement of grievances to consist of?"

"In a few words, of the following: music uninterruptedly; Guiche's assiduity; suspicions of treasonable plots and practices."

"And the proofs?"

"There *are* none."

"Very well; I will go at once to see Madame." The king turned to look in the mirrors at his costume, which was very rich, and his face, which was radiant as the morning. "I suppose my brother is kept a little at a distance," said the king.

"Fire and water cannot be more opposite."

"That will do. Permit me, madame, to kiss your hands, the most beautiful hands in France."

"May you be successful, sire,—as the family peacemaker."

"I do not employ an ambassador," said Louis; "which is as much as to say that I shall succeed." He laughed as he left the room, and carelessly adjusted his ruffles as he went along.

CHAPTER LII.

THE MEDIATOR.

WHEN the king made his appearance in Madame's apartments, the courtiers, whom the news of a conjugal misunderstanding had dispersed through the various apart-

ments, began to entertain the most serious apprehensions. A storm was brewing in that direction, the elements of which the Chevalier de Lorraine, in the midst of the different groups, was analyzing with delight, contributing to the weaker, and acting, according to his own wicked designs, in such a manner with regard to the stronger, as to produce the most disastrous consequences possible. As Anne of Austria had herself said, the presence of the king gave a solemn and serious character to the event. Indeed, in the year 1662, the dissatisfaction of Monsieur with Madame, and the king's intervention in the private affairs of Monsieur, was a matter of no inconsiderable moment.

The boldest, even, who had been the associates of the Comte de Guiche, had, from the first moment, held aloof from him, with a sort of nervous apprehension; and the comte himself, infected by the general panic, retired to his own room. The king entered Madame's private apartments, acknowledging and returning the salutations, as he was always in the habit of doing. The ladies of honor were ranged in a line on his passage along the gallery. Although His Majesty was very much preoccupied, he gave the glance of a master at the two rows of young and beautiful girls, who modestly cast down their eyes, blushing as they felt the king's gaze fall upon them. One only of the number, whose long hair fell in silken masses upon the most beautiful skin imaginable, was pale, and could hardly sustain herself, notwithstanding the knocks which her companion gave her with her elbow. It was La Vallière, whom Montalais supported in that manner, by whispering some of that courage to her with which she herself was so abundantly provided. The king could not resist turning round to look at them again. Their faces, which had already been raised, were again lowered, but the only fair head among them remained motionless, as if all the strength and intelligence she had left, had abandoned her.

When he entered Madame's room, Louis found his sister-in-law reclining upon the cushions of her cabinet. She rose and made a profound reverence, murmuring some words of thanks for the honor she was receiving. She then resumed her seat, overcome by a sudden weakness, which was no doubt assumed, for a delightful color animated her cheeks, and her eyes, still red from the tears she had recently shed, never had more fire in them. When the king was seated, and as soon as he had remarked, with that accuracy of observation which characterized him, the disorder of the apartment, and the no less great disorder of Madame's countenance, he assumed a playful manner, saying, "My dear sister, at what hour to-day would you wish the repetition of the *ballet* to take place?"

Madame, shaking her charming head, slowly and languishingly said: "Ah! sire, will you graciously excuse my appearance at the repetition; I was about to send to inform you that I could not attend to-day."

"Indeed," said the king, in apparent surprise; "are you not well?"

"No, sire."

"I will summon your medical attendants, then."

"No, for they can do nothing for my indisposition."

"You alarm me."

"Sire, I wish to ask your majesty's permission to return to England."

The king started. "Return to England," he said; "do you really say what you mean?"

"I say it reluctantly, sire," replied the grand-daughter of Henry IV., firmly, her beautiful black eyes flashing. "I regret to have to confide such matters to your majesty, but I feel myself too unhappy at your majesty's court; and I wish to return to my own family."

"Madame, madame," exclaimed the king, as he approached her.

"Listen to me, sire," continued the young woman, acquiring by degrees that ascendancy over her interrogator which her beauty and her nervous nature conferred; "young as I am, I have already suffered humiliation, and have endured disdain here. Oh! do not contradict me, sire," she said, with a smile. The king colored.

"Then," she continued, "I had reasoned myself into the belief that Heaven called me into existence with that object, I, the daughter of a powerful monarch; that since my father had been deprived of life, Heaven could well smite my pride. I have suffered greatly; I have been the cause, too, of my mother suffering much; but I vowed that if Providence ever placed me in a position of independence, even were it that of a workwoman of the lower classes, who gains her bread by her labor, I would never suffer humiliation again. That day has now arrived; I have been restored to the fortune due to my rank and to my birth; I have even ascended again the steps of a throne, and I thought that, in allying myself with a French prince, I should find in him a relation, a friend, an equal; but I perceive I have found only a master, and I rebel. My mother shall know nothing of it; you whom I respect, and whom I—love——"

The king started; never had any voice so gratified his ear.

"You, sire, who know all, since you have come here; you will, perhaps, understand me. If you had not come, I should have gone to you. I wish for permission to go away. I leave it to your delicacy of feeling to exculpate and to protect me."

"My dear sister," murmured the king, overpowered by this bold attack, "have you reflected upon the enormous difficulty of the project you have conceived?"

"Sire, I do not reflect, I feel. Attacked, I instinctively repel the attack, nothing more."

"Come, tell me what have they done to you?" said the king.

The princess, it will have been seen, by this peculiarly feminine maneuver, had escaped every reproach, and advanced on her side a far more serious one; from the accused she became the accuser. It is an infallible sign of guilt; but notwithstanding that, all women, even the least clever of the sex, invariably know how to derive some such means of turning the tables. The king had forgotten that he was paying her a visit, in order to say to her, "What have you done to my brother?" and that he was reduced to weakly asking her. "What have they done to you?"

"What have they done to me!" replied Madame. "One must be a woman to understand it, sire,—they have made me shed tears;" and, with one of her fingers, whose slenderness and perfect whiteness were unequaled, she pointed to her brilliant eyes swimming with unshed drops, and again began to weep.

"I implore you, my dear sister," said the king, advancing to take her warm and throbbing hand, which she abandoned to him.

"In the first place, sire, I was deprived of the presence of my brother's friend. The Duke of Buckingham was an agreeable, cheerful visitor; my own countryman, who knew my habits: I will say, almost a companion, so accustomed had we been to pass our days together, with our other friends, upon the beautiful piece of water at St. James's."

"But Villiers was in love with you?"

"A pretext! What does it matter," she said seriously, "whether the duke was in love with me or not? Is a man in love so very dangerous for me? Ah! sire, it is not sufficient for a man to love a woman." And she

smiled so tenderly, and with so much archness, that the king felt his heart swell and throb in his breast.

"At all events, if my brother were jealous?" interrupted the king.

"Very well, I admit that is a reason; and the duko was sent away accordingly."

"No, not sent away."

"Driven away, dismissed, expelled, then, if you prefer it, sire. One of the first gentlemen of Europe obliged to leave the court of the King of France, of Louis XIV., like a beggar, on account of a glance or a bouquet. It was little worthy of a most gallant court; but forgive me, sire; I forgot, that, in speaking thus, I am attacking your sovereign power."

"I assure you, my dear sister, it was not I who dismissed the Duke of Buckingham; I was charmed with him."

"It was not you?" said Madame; "ah! so much the better;"—and she emphasized the "so much the better," as if she had instead said, "so much the worse."

A few minutes silence ensued. She then resumed: "The Duke of Buckingham having left—I now know why and by whose means. I thought I should have recovered my tranquillity: but, not at all, for all at once, Monsieur found another pretext; all at once——"

"All at once," said the king, playfully, "some one else presents himself. It is but natural; you are beautiful, and will always meet with men who will madly love you."

"In that case," exclaimed the princess, "I will create a solitude around me, which indeed seems to be what is wished, and what is being prepared for me. But no, I prefer to return to London. There I am known and appreciated. I shall have friends, without fearing they may be regarded as my lovers. Shame! it is a disgraceful suspicion, and unworthy a gentleman. Monsieur has

lost everything in my estimation, since he has shown me he can be a tyrant to a woman."

"Nay, nay, my brother's only fault is that of loving you."

"Love me! Monsieur love me! Ah! sire," and she burst out laughing. "Monsieur will never love any woman," she said; "Monsieur loves himself too much; no, unhappily for me, Monsieur's jealousy is of the worst kind—he is jealous without love."

"Confess, however," said the king, who began to be excited by this varied and animated conversation;—"confess that Guiche loves you."

"Ah! sire, I know nothing about that."

"You must have perceived it. A man who loves readily betrays himself."

"M. de Guiche has not betrayed himself."

"My dear sister, you are defending M. de Guiche."

"I, indeed! Ah, sire, I only needed a suspicion from yourself to crown my wretchedness."

"No, madame, no," returned the king, hurriedly; "do not distress yourself. Nay, you are weeping. I implore you to calm yourself."

She wept, however, and large tears fell upon her hands; the king took one of her hands in his, and kissed the tears away. She looked at him so sadly and with so much tenderness that he felt his heart giving way under her gaze.

"You have no kind of feeling, then, for Guiche?" he said, more disturbed than became his character of mediator.

"None—absolutely none."

"Then I can reassure my brother in that respect?"

"Nothing will satisfy him, sire. Do not believe he is jealous. Monsieur has been badly advised by some one, and he is of nervous disposition."

"He may well be so when you are concerned," said the king.

Madame cast down her eyes, and was silent; the king did so likewise, still holding her hand all the while. Their momentary silence seemed to last an age. Madame gently withdrew her hand, and, from that moment, she felt her triumph was certain, and that the field of battle was her own.

"Monsieur complains," said the king, "that you prefer the society of private individuals to his own conversation and society."

"But Monsieur passes his life in looking at his face in the glass, and in plotting all sorts of spiteful things against women with the Chevalier De Lorraine."

"Oh, you are going somewhat too far."

"I only tell you what is true. Do you observe for yourself, sire, and you will see that I am right."

"I will observe: but in the meantime, what satisfaction can I give my brother?"

"My departure."

"You repeat that word," exclaimed the king, imprudently, as if, during the last ten minutes, such a change had been produced that Madame would have had all her ideas on the subject thoroughly changed.

"Sire, I cannot be happy here any longer," she said. "M. de Guiche annoys Monsieur. Will he be sent away too?"

"If it be necessary, why not?" replied the king, smiling.

"Well; and after M. de Guiche—whom, by the by, I shall regret—I warn you, sire."

"Ah, you will regret him?"

"Certainly; he is amiable, he has a great friendship for me, and he amuses me."

"If Monsieur were only to hear you," said the king, slightly annoyed, "do you know I would not undertake

to make it up again between you ; nay, I would not even attempt it."

"Sire, can you, even now, prevent Monsieur from being jealous of the first person who may approach? I know very well that M. de Guiche is not the first."

"Again: I warn you that as a good brother I shall take a dislike to De Guiche."

"Ah, sire, do not, I entreat you, adopt either the sympathies or the dislikes of Monsieur. Remain king; better for yourself and for every one else."

"You jest charmingly, madame ; and I can well understand how the people you attack must adore you."

"And is that the reason why you, sire, whom I had regarded as my defender, are about to join these who persecute me?" said Madame.

"I your persecutor ! Heaven forbid !"

"Then," she continued, languishingly, "grant me a favor."

"Whatever you wish."

"Let me return to England."

"Never, never !" exclaimed Louis XIV.

"I am a prisoner, then?"

"In France—if France is a prison,—yes."

"What must I do, then?"

"I will tell you. Instead of devoting yourself to friendships which are somewhat unsuitable, instead of alarming us by your retirement, remain always in our society, do not leave us, let us live as a united family. M. de Guiche is certainly very amiable ; but if, at least, we do not possess his wit——"

"Ah, sire, you know very well you are pretending to be modest."

"No, I swear to you. One may be a king, and yet feel that he possesses fewer chances of pleasing than many other gentlemen."

"I am sure, sire, that you do not believe a single word you are saying."

The king looked at Madame tenderly, and said, "Will you promise me one thing?"

"What is it?"

"That you will no longer waste upon strangers, in your own apartments, the time which you owe us. Shall we make an offensive and defensive alliance against the common enemy?"

"An alliance with you, sire?"

"Why not? Are you not a sovereign power?"

"But are you, sire, a reliable ally?"

"You shall see, madame."

"And when shall this alliance commence?"

"This very day."

"I will draw up the treaty, and you shall sign it."

"Blindly."

"Then, sire, I promise you wonders; you are the star of the court, and when you make your appearance, everything will be resplendent."

"Oh, madame, madame," said Louis XIV., "you know well that there is no brilliancy that does not proceed from yourself, and that if I assume the sun as my device, it is only an emblem."

"Sire, you flatter your ally, and you wish to deceive her," said Madame, threatening the king with her finger menacingly raised.

"What! you believe I am deceiving you, when I assure you of my affection?"

"Yes."

"What makes you so suspicious?"

"One thing."

"What is it? I shall indeed be unhappy if I do not overcome it."

"That one thing in question, sire, is not in your power, not even in the power of Heaven."

"Tell me what it is."

"The past."

"I do not understand, madame," said the king, precisely because he had understood her but too well.

The princess took his hand in hers. "Sire," she said, "I have had the misfortune to displease you for so long a period, that I have almost the right to ask myself to-day why you were able to accept me as a sister-in-law."

"Displease me! You have displeased me?"

"Nay, do not deny it, for I remember it well."

"Our alliance shall date from to-day," exclaimed the king, with a warmth that was not assumed. "You will not think any more of the past, will you? I myself am resolved that I will not. I shall always remember the present; I have it before my eyes: look." And he led the princess before a mirror, in which she saw herself reflected, blushing and beautiful enough to overcome a saint.

"It is all the same," she murmured; "it will not be a very worthy alliance."

"Must I swear?" inquired the king, intoxicated by the voluptuous turn the whole conversation had taken.

"Oh, I will not refuse to witness a resounding oath," said Madame; "it has always the *semblance* of security."

The king knelt upon a footstool and took Madame's hand. She, with a smile that no painter could ever succeed in depicting, and which a poet only might imagine, gave him both her hands, in which he hid his burning face. Neither of them could utter a syllable. The king felt Madame withdraw her hands, caressing his face while she did so. He rose immediately and left the apartment. The courtiers remarked his heightened color, and concluded that the scene had been a stormy

one. The Chevalier de Lorraine, however, hastened to say, "Nay, be comforted, gentlemen, his majesty is always pale when he is angry."

CHAPTER LIII.

THE ADVISERS.

THE king left Madame in a state of agitation it would have been difficult even for himself to have explained. It is impossible, in fact, to depict the secret play of those strange sympathies, which suddenly, and apparently without any cause, are excited, after many years passed in the greatest calmness and indifference, by two hearts destined to love each other. Why had Louis formerly disdained, almost hated, Madame? Why did he now find the same woman so beautiful, so captivating? And why, not only were his thoughts occupied about her, but still more, why were they so continuously occupied about her? Why, in fact, had Madame, whose eyes and mind were sought for in another direction, shown during the last week towards the king a semblance of favor, which encouraged the belief of still greater regard. It must not be supposed that Louis proposed to himself any plan of seduction; the tie which united Madame to his brother was, or at least seemed to him, an insuperable barrier; he was even too far removed from that barrier to perceive its existence. But on the downward path of those passions in which the heart rejoices, towards which youth impels us, no one can decide where to stop, not even the man who has in advance calculated all the chances of his own success or another's submission. As far as Madame was concerned, her regard for the king may easily be ex-

plained : she was young, a coquette, and ardently fond of admiration. Hers was one of those buoyant, impetuous natures, which upon a theater would leap over the greatest obstacles to obtain an acknowledgment of applause from the spectators. It was not surprising, then, that, after having been adored by Buckingham, by De Guiche, who was superior to Buckingham, even if it were only from that negative merit, so much appreciated by women, that is to say, novelty—it was not surprising, we say, that the princess should raise her ambition to being admired by the king, who not only was the first person in the kingdom, but was one of the handsomest and cleverest men in Europe. As for the sudden passion with which Louis was inspired for his sister-in-law, physiology would perhaps supply an explanation by some hackneyed commonplace reasons, and nature by means of her mysterious affinity of characters. Madame had the most beautiful black eyes in the world : Louis, eyes as beautiful, but blue. Madame was laughter-loving and unreserved in her manners ; Louis, melancholy and diffident. Summoned to meet each other, for the first time, upon the grounds of interest and common curiosity, these two opposite natures were mutually influenced by the mingling of their reciprocal contradictions of character. Louis, when he returned to his own rooms, acknowledged to himself that Madame was the most attractive woman of his court. Madame left alone, delightedly thought that she had made a great impression on the king. This feeling with her must remain passive, whilst the king could not but act with all the natural vehemence of the heated fancies of a young man, and of a young man who has but to express a wish to see his wish fulfilled.

The first thing the king did was to announce to Monsieur that everything was quietly arranged ; that Madame had the greatest respect, the sincerest affection for him ;

but that she was of a proud, impetuous character, and that her susceptibilities were so acute as to require very careful management.

Monsieur replied in the reticent tone of voice he generally adopted with his brother, that he could not very well understand the susceptibilities of a woman whose conduct might, in his opinion, expose her to censorious remarks, and that if any one had a right to feel wounded, it was he, Monsieur himself. To this the king replied in a quick tone of voice, which showed the interest he took in his sister-in-law, "Thank heaven, Madame is above censure."

"The censure of others, certainly I admit," said Monsieur, "but not above mine, I presume."

"Well," said the king, "all I have to say, Philip, is that Madame's conduct does not deserve your censure. She certainly is heedless and singular, but professes the best feelings. The English character is not always well understood in France, and the liberty of English manners sometimes surprises those who do not know the extent to which this liberty is enriched by innocence."

"Ah!" said Monsieur, more and more piqued, "from the very moment that your majesty absolves my wife, whom I accuse, my wife is not guilty, and I have nothing more to say."

"Philip," replied the king hastily, for he felt the voice of conscience murmuring softly in his heart that Monsieur was not altogether wrong, "what I have done, and what I have said, has been only for your happiness. I was told that you complained of a want of confidence and attention on Madame's part and I did not wish your uneasiness to be prolonged. It is part of my duty to watch over your household, as over that of the humblest of my subjects. I have satisfied myself, therefore, with the sincerest pleasure, that your apprehensions have no foundation."

"And," continued Monsieur, in an interrogative tone of voice, and fixing his eyes upon his brother, "what your majesty has discovered for Madame—and I bow myself to your superior judgment—have you verified for those who have been the cause of the scandal of which I complain?"

"You are right, Phillip," said the king; "I will reserve that point for future consideration."

These words comprised an order as well as a consolation; the prince felt it to be so, and withdrew.

As for Louis, he went to seek his mother, for he felt that he had need of a more complete absolution than that he had just received from his brother. Anne of Austria did not entertain for M. de Guiche the same reasons for indulgence she had had for Buckingham. She perceived, at the very first words he pronounced, that Louis was not disposed to be severe.

To appear in a contradictory humor, was one of the stratagems of the good queen, in order to succeed in ascertaining the truth. But Louis was no longer in his apprenticeship; already for more than a year past he had been king, and during that year he had learned how to dissemble. Listening to Anne of Austria, in order to permit her to disclose her own thoughts, testifying his approval only by look and gesture, he became convinced, from certain piercing glances, and from certain skillful insinuations, that the queen, so clear-sighted in matters of gallantry, had, if not guessed, at least suspected, his weakness for Madame. Of all his auxiliaries, Anne of Austria would be the most important to secure; of all his enemies, Anne of Austria would prove most dangerous. Louis therefore changed his manœuvres. He complained of Madame, absolved Monsieur, listened to what his mother had to say of De Guiche, as he had previously listened to what she had had to say of Buckingham, and

then, when he saw that she thought she had gained a complete victory over him, he left her.

The whole of the court, that is to say all the favorites and more intimate associates, and they were numerous, since there were already five masters, were assembled in the evening for the repetition of the ballet. This interval had been occupied by poor De Guiche in receiving visits. among the number was one which he hoped and feared nearly to an equal extent. It was that of the Chevalier de Lorraine. About three o'clock in the afternoon the chevalier entered De Guiche's rooms. His looks were of the most reassuring character. "Monsieur," said he to De Guiche, "was in an excellent humor, and no one could say that the slightest cloud had passed across the conjugal sky. Besides, Monsieur was not one to bear ill-feeling."

For a long time past, during his residence at the court, the Chevalier de Lorraine had decided, that of Louis the Thirteenth's two sons, Monsieur was the one who had inherited the father's character—an uncertain, irresolute character; impulsively good, indifferently disposed at bottom; but certainly a cipher for his friends. He especially cheered De Guiche, by pointing out to him that Madame would, before long, succeed in governing her husband, and that, consequently, that man would govern Monsieur who should succeed in influencing Madame.

To this, De Guiche, full of mistrust and presence of mind, replied, "Yes, chevalier; but I believe Madame to be a very dangerous person."

"In what respect?"

"She has perceived that Monsieur is not very passionately inclined towards women."

"Quite true," said the Chevalier de Lorraine laughing.

"In that case, Madame will choose the first one who approaches, in order to make him the object of her preference, and to bring back her husband by jealousy."

"Deep! deep!" exclaimed the chevalier.

"But true," replied De Guiche.

Neither the one nor the other expressed his real thought. De Guiche, at the very moment he thus attacked Madame's character, mentally asked her forgiveness from the bottom of his heart. The chevalier, while admiring De Guiche's penetration, was leading him, blindfolded, to the brink of the precipice. De Guiche then questioned him more directly upon the effect produced by the scene of the morning, and upon the still more serious effect produced by the scene at dinner.

"But I have already told you they are all laughing at it," replied the Chevalier de Lorraine, "and Monsieur himself at the head of them."

"Yet," hazarded De Guiche, "I have heard that the king paid Madame a visit."

"Yes, precisely so. Madame was the only one who did not laugh, and the king went to her in order to make her laugh too."

"So that——"

"So that nothing is altered in the arrangements of the day," said the chevalier.

"And is there a repetition of the ballet this evening?"

"Certainly."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite," returned the chevalier.

At this moment of the conversation between the two young men, Raoul entered, looking full of anxiety. As soon as the chevalier, who had a secret dislike for him, as for every other noble character, perceived him enter, he rose from his seat.

"What do you advise me to do, then?" inquired De Guiche of the chevalier.

"I advise you to go to sleep in perfect tranquillity, my dear count."

"And my advice, De Guiche," said Raoul, "is the very opposite."

"What is that?"

"To mount your horse and set off at once for one of your estates; on your arrival, follow the chevalier's advice, if you like; and, what is more, you can sleep there as long and as tranquilly as you please."

"What! set off!" exclaimed the chevalier, feigning surprise; "why should De Guiche set off!"

"Because, and you cannot be ignorant of it—you particularly so—because every one is talking about the scene which has passed between Monsieur and De Guiche."

De Guiche turned pale.

"Not at all," replied the chevalier, "not at all, and you have been wrongly informed, M. de Bragelonne."

"I have been perfectly well informed, on the contrary, monsieur," replied Raoul, "and the advice I give De Guiche is that of a friend."

During this discussion, De Guiche, somewhat shaken, looked alternately first at one and then at the other of his advisers. He inwardly felt that a game, important in all its consequences for the rest of his life, was being played at that moment.

"Is it not the fact," said the chevalier, putting the question to the count himself, "is it not the fact, De Guiche, that the scene was not so tempestuous as the Vicomte de Bragelonne seems to think, and who, moreover, was not himself there?"

"Whether tempestuous or not," persisted Raoul, "it is not precisely of the scene itself that I am speaking, but of the consequences that may ensue. I know that Monsieur has threatened, and I know that Madame has been in tears."

"Madame in tears!" exclaimed De Guiche, imprudently clasping his hands.

"Ah!" said the chevalier, laughing, "this is indeed a circumstance I was not acquainted with. You are decidedly better informed than I am, Monsieur de Bragelonne."

"And it is because I am better informed than yourself, chevalier, that I insist upon De Guiche leaving."

"No, no; I regret to differ from you, vicomte; but his departure is unnecessary. Why, indeed, should he leave? tell us why."

"The king!"

"The king," exclaimed De Guiche.

"Yes; I tell you the king has taken up the affair."

"Bah!" said the chevalier, "the king likes De Guiche, and particularly his father; reflect, that, if the count were to leave, it would be an admission that he had done something which merited rebuke."

"Why so?"

"No doubt of it; when one runs away, it is either from guilt or fear."

"Sometimes, because a man is offended; often because he is wrongfully accused," said Bragelonne. "We will assign as a reason for his departure, that he feels hurt and injured—nothing will be easier: we will say that we both did our utmost to keep him, and you, at least, will not be speaking otherwise than the truth. Come, De Guiche, you are innocent, and, being so, the scene of to-day must have wounded you. So set off."

"No, De Guiche, remain where you are," said the chevalier; "precisely as M. de Bragelonne has put it, because you are innocent. Once more, forgive me, vicomte: but my opinion is the very opposite to your own."

"And you are at perfect liberty to maintain it, monsieur; but be assured that the exile which De Guiche will voluntarily impose upon himself will be of short duration. He can terminate it whenever he pleases, and returning

from his voluntary exile, he will meet with smiles from all lips; while, on the contrary, the anger of the king may now draw down a storm upon his head, the end of which no one can foresee."

The chevalier smiled, and muttered to himself. "That is the very thing I wish." And at the same time he shrugged his shoulders, a movement which did not escape the count, who dreaded, if he quitted the court, to seem to yield to a feeling of fear.

"No, no; I have decided, Bragelonne; I stay."

"I prophesy, then," said Raoul, sadly, "that misfortune will befall you, De Guiche."

"I, too, am a prophet, but not a prophet of evil; on the contrary, count, I say to you, remain."

"Are you sure," inquired De Guiche, "that the repetition of the ballet still takes place?"

"Quite sure."

"Well, you see, Raoul," continued De Guiche, endeavoring to smile, "you see the court is not so very sorrowful, or so readily disposed for internal dissensions, when dancing is carried on with such assiduity. Come, acknowledge that," said the count to Raoul, who shook his head, saying, "I have nothing to add."

"But," inquired the chevalier, curious to learn whence Raoul had obtained his information, the exactitude of which he was inwardly forced to admit, "since you say you are well informed, vicomte, how can you be better informed than myself, who am one of the prince's most intimate companions?"

"To such a declaration I submit. You certainly ought to be perfectly well informed, I admit; and, as a man of honor is incapable of saying anything but what he knows to be true, or of speaking otherwise than what he thinks, I will say no more, but confess myself defeated, and leave you in possession of the field of battle."

Whereupon Raoul, who now seemed only to care to be left quiet, threw himself upon a couch, whilst the count summoned his servants to aid him in dressing. The chevalier, finding that time was passing away, wished to leave; but he feared, too, that Raoul, left alone with De Guiche, might yet influence him to change his mind. He therefore made use of his last resource.

"Madame," he said, "will be brilliant; she appears to-day in her costume of Pomona."

"Yes, that is so," exclaimed the count.

"And she has just given directions in consequence," continued the chevalier. "You know, Monsieur de Bragelonne, that the king is to appear as Spring."

"It will be admirable," said De Guiche; "and that is a better reason for me to remain than any you have yet given, because I am to appear as Autumn, and shall have to dance with Madame. I cannot absent myself without the king's orders, since my departure would interrupt the ballet."

"I," said the chevalier, "am to be only a simple *égyptien*; true it is, I am a bad dancer, and my legs are not well made. Gentlemen, adieu. Do not forget the basket of fruit, which you are to offer to Pomona, count."

"Rest assured," said De Guiche, delightedly, "I shall forget nothing."

"I am now quite certain that he will remain," murmured the Chevalier de Lorraine to himself.

Raoul, when the chevalier had left, did not even attempt to dissuade his friend, for he felt that it would be trouble thrown away: he merely observed to the comte, in his melancholy and melodious voice, "You are embarking in a most dangerous enterprise. I know you well: you go to extremes in everything, and the lady you love does so too. Admitting for an instant that she should at last love you——"

"Oh, never!" exclaimed De Guiche.

"Why do you say never?"

"Because it would be a great misfortune for both of us."

"In that case, instead of regarding you as simply imprudent, I cannot but consider you as absolutely mad."

"Why?"

"Are you perfectly sure—mind, answer me frankly—that you do not wish her whom you love to make any sacrifice for you?"

"Yes, yes; quite sure."

"Love her then at a distance."

"What! at a distance?"

"Certainly; what matters being present or absent, since you expect nothing from her. Love her portrait, a memento."

"Raoul!"

"Love a shadow, an illusion, a chimera; be devoted to the affection itself, in giving a name to your ideality."

"Ah!"

"You turn away; your servants approach. I will say no more. In good or bad fortune, De Guiche, depend upon me."

"Indeed I shall do so."

"Very well; that is all I had to say to you. Spare no pains in your person, De Guiche, and look your very best. Adieu."

"You will not be present then at the ballet, vicomte?"

"No; I shall have a visit to pay in town. Farewell, De Guiche."

The reception was to take place in the king's apartments. In the first place, there were the queens, then Madame, and a few ladies of the court, who had been carefully selected. A great number of courtiers, also selected, occupied the time, before the dancing com-

menced, in conversing, as people knew how to converse in those times. None of the ladies who had received invitations appeared in the costumes of the *fête*, as the Chevalier de Lorraine had predicted, but many conversations took place about the rich and ingenious toilettes designed by different painters for the ballet of "The Demi-Gods," for thus were termed the kings and queens, of which Fontainebleau was about to become the Pantheon. Monsieur arrived, holding in his hand a drawing representing his character; he looked somewhat anxious; he bowed courteously to the young queen and his mother, but saluted Madame almost cavalierly. His notice of her and his coldness of manner were observed by all. M. De Guiche indemnified the princess by a look of passionate devotion, and it must be admitted that Madame, as she raised her eyes, returned it to him with interest. It is unquestionable that De Guiche had never looked so handsome, for Madame's glance had its customary effect of lighting up the features of the son of the Marshal de Grammont. The king's sister-in-law felt a storm mustering above her head; she felt, too that during the whole of the day, so fruitful in future events, she had acted unjustly, if not treasonably, towards one who loved her with such a depth of devotion. In her eyes the moment seemed to have arrived for an acknowledgment to the poor victim of the injustice of the morning. Her heart spoke, and murmured the name of De Guiche; the count was sincerely pitied, and accordingly gained the victory over all others. Neither Monsieur, nor the king, nor the Duke of Buckingham, was any longer thought of; De Guiche at that moment reigned without a rival. But although Monsieur also looked very handsome, still he could not be compared to the count. It is well known—indeed all women say so—that a wide difference invariably exists between the good looks of a lover and those of a husband. Besides,

in the present case, after Monsieur had left, and after the courteous and affectionate recognition of the young queen and of the queen-mother, and the careless and indifferent notice of Madame, which all the courtiers had remarked ; all these motives gave the lover the advantage over the husband. Monsieur was too great a personage to notice these details. Nothing is so certain as a well-settled idea of superiority to prove the inferiority of the man who has that opinion of himself. The king arrived. Every one looked for what might possibly happen, in the glance, which began to bestir the world, like the brow of Jupiter Tonans. Louis had none of his brother's gloominess, but was perfectly radiant. Having examined the greater part of the drawings which were displayed for his inspection on every side, he gave his opinion or made his remarks upon them, and in this manner rendered some happy and others wretched by a single word. Suddenly, his glance, which was smilingly directed toward Madame, detected the silent correspondence established between the princess and the count. He bit his lip, but when he opened them again to utter a few commonplace remarks, he said, advancing towards the queens :—

“I have just been informed that everything is now prepared at Fontainebleau, in accordance with my directions.” A murmur of satisfaction arose from the different groups, and the king perceived on every face the greatest anxiety to receive an invitation for the *fêtes*. “I shall leave to-morrow,” he added. Whereupon the profoundest silence immediately ensued. “And I invite,” said the king, finishing, “all those who are now present to get ready to accompany me.”

Smiling faces were now everywhere visible, with the exception of Monsieur, who seemed to retain his ill-humor. The different noblemen and ladies of the court thereupon defiled before the king, one after the other, in order to

thank his majesty for the great honor which had been conferred upon them by the invitation. When it came to De Guiche's turn, the king said, "Ah! M. de Guiche, I did not see you."

The comte bowed, and Madame turned pale. De Guiche was about to open his lips to express his thanks, when the king said, "Comte, this is the season for farming purposes in the country, I am sure your tenants in Normandy will be glad to see you."

The king, after this pitiless attack, turned his back on the poor comte, whose turn it was now to become pale: he advanced a few steps towards the king, forgetting that the king is never spoken to except in reply to questions addressed.

"I have perhaps misunderstood your majesty," he stammered out.

The king turned his head slightly, and with a cold and stern glance, which plunged like a sword relentlessly into the hearts of those under disgrace, repeated, "I said retire to your estates," allowing every syllable to fall slowly one by one.

A cold perspiration bedewed the comte's face, his hands convulsively opened, and his hat, which he held between his trembling fingers, fell to the ground. Louis sought his mother's glance, as though to show her that he was master: he sought his brother's triumphant look, as if to ask him if he were satisfied with the vengeance taken: and lastly, his eyes fell upon Madame; but the princess was laughing and smiling with Madame de Noailles. She had heard nothing, or rather had pretended not to hear at all. The Chevalier de Lorraine looked on also, with one of those looks of fixed hostility that seemed to give to a man's glance the power of a lever when it raises an obstacle, wrests it away, and casts it to a distance. M. de Guiche was left alone in the king's



HE FELL BACKWARDS, COMPLETELY OVERCOME.

cabinet, the whole of the company having departed. Shadows seemed to dance before his eyes. He suddenly broke through the settled despair that overwhelmed him, and flew to hide himself in his own room, where Raoul awaited him, immovable in his own sad presentiments.

"Well?" he murmured, seeing his friend enter, bare-headed, with a wild gaze and tottering gait.

"Yes, yes, it is true," said De Guiche, unable to utter more, and falling exhausted upon the couch.

"And she?" inquired Raoul.

"She," exclaimed his unhappy friend, as he raised his hand, clenched in anger towards heaven. "She!——"

"What did she say and do?"

"She said that her dress suited her admirably, and then she laughed."

A fit of hysteric laughter seemed to shatter his nerves for he fell backwards, completely overcome.

CHAPTER LIV.

FONTAINEBLEAU.

For four days, every kind of enchantment brought together in the magnificent gardens of Fontainebleau, had converted this spot into a place of the most perfect enjoyment. M. Colbert seemed gifted with ubiquity. In the morning, there were the accounts of the previous night's expenses to settle; during the day, programmes, essays, enrolments, payments. M. Colbert had amassed four millions of francs, and dispersed them with sleepless economy. He was horrified at the expenses which mythology involved; not a wood nymph, nor a dryad, that cost less

than a hundred francs a day! The dress alone amounted to three hundred francs. The expense of powder and sulphur for fireworks amounted, every night, to a hundred thousand francs. In addition to these, the illuminations on the borders of the sheet of water cost thirty thousand francs every evening. The *fêtes* had been magnificent; and Colbert could not restrain his delight. From time to time, he noticed Madame and the king setting forth on hunting expeditions, or preparing for the reception of different fantastic personages, solemn ceremonies, which had been extemporized a fortnight before, and in which Madame's sparkling wit and the king's magnificence were equally well displayed.

For Madame, the heroine of the *fête*, replied to the addresses of the deputations from unknown races—Garamanthi, Scythians, Hyperboreans, Caucasians, and Patagonians, who seemed to issue from the ground for the purpose of approaching her with their congratulations; and, upon every representative of these races the king bestowed a diamond, or some other article of value. Then the deputies, in verses more or less amusing, compared the king to the sun, Madame to Phœbe, the sun's sister, and the queen and Monsieur were no more spoken of than if the king had married Henrietta of England, and not Maria Theresa of Austria. The happy pair hand in hand, imperceptibly pressing each other's fingers, drank in deep draughts the sweet beverage of adulation, by which the attractions of youth, beauty, power, and love are enhanced. Every one at Fontainebleau was amazed at the extent of the influence which Madame had so rapidly acquired over the king, and whispered among themselves that Madame was, in point of fact, the true queen; and, in effect, the king himself proclaimed its truth by his every thought, word, and look. He formed his wishes, he drew his inspirations from Madame's eyes, and his delight was

unbounded when Madame deigned to smile upon him. And was Madame, on her side, intoxicated with the power she wielded, as she beheld every one at her feet?—This was a question she herself could hardly answer; but what she did know was, that she could frame no wish, and that she felt herself to be perfectly happy. The result of all these changes, the source of which emanated from the royal will, was that Monsieur, instead of being the second person in the kingdom, had, in reality, become the third. And it was now far worse than in the time when De Guiche's guitars were heard in Madame's apartments; for, then, at least, Monsieur had the satisfaction of frightening those who annoyed him. Since the departure, however, of the enemy, who had been driven away by means of his alliance with the king, Monsieur had to submit to a burden, heavier, but in a very different sense, to his former one. Every evening Madame returned home quite exhausted. Horse-riding, bathing in the Seine, spectacles, dinners under the leafy covert of the trees, balls on the banks of the grand canal, concerts, etc., etc.; all this would have been sufficient to have killed, not a slight and delicate woman, but the strongest porter in the *château*. It is perfectly true, that, with regard to dancing, concerts, and promenades, and such matters, a woman is far stronger than the most robust of porters. But however great a woman's strength may be, there is a limit to it, and she cannot hold out long under such a system. As for Monsieur, he had not even the satisfaction of witnessing Madame's abdication of her royalty in the evening, for she lived in the royal pavilion with the young queen and the queen-mother. As a matter of course, the Chevalier de Lorraine did not quit Monsieur, and did not fail to distil drops of gall into every wound the latter received. The result was, that Monsieur—who had at first, been in the highest spirits, and completely restored since Guiche's

departure—subsided into his melancholy state, three days after the court was installed at Fontainebleau.

It happened, however, that, one day, about two o'clock in the afternoon, Monsieur, who had risen late, and had bestowed upon his toilet more than his usual attention, it happened, we repeat, that Monsieur, who had not heard of any plans having been arranged for the day, formed the project of collecting his own court, and of carrying Madame off with him to Moret, where he possessed a charming country house. He accordingly went to the queen's pavilion, and was astonished, on entering, to find none of the royal servants in attendance. Quite alone, therefore, he entered the rooms, a door on the left opening to Madame's apartment, the one on the right to the young queen's. In his wife's apartment, Monsieur was informed, by a sempstress who was working there, that everyone had left at eleven o'clock, for the purpose of bathing in the Seine, that a grand *fête* was to be made of the expedition, that all the carriages had been placed at the park gates, and that they had all set out more than an hour ago.

"Very good," said Monsieur, "the idea is a good one; the heat is very oppressive, and I have no objection to bathe too."

He summoned his servants, but no one came. He summoned those in attendance on Madame, but everybody had gone out. He went to the stables, where he was informed by a groom that there were no carriages of any description. He desired that a couple of horses should be saddled, one for himself, and the other for his valet. The groom told him that all the horses had been sent away. Monsieur, pale with anger, again descended towards the queen's apartments, and penetrated as far as Anne of Austria's oratory, where he perceived, through the half-opened tapestry-hangings, his young and beautiful sister on her knees before the queen-mother, who appeared weeping

bitterly. He had not been either seen or heard. He cautiously approached the opening, and listened, the sight of so much grief having aroused his curiosity. Not only was the young queen weeping, but she was complaining also. "Yes," she said, "the king neglects me, the king devotes himself to pleasures and amusements only in which I have no share."

"Patience, patience, my daughter," said Anne of Austria in Spanish; and then, also in Spanish, added some words of advice, which Monsieur did not understand. The queen replied by accusations, mingled with sighs and sobs, among which Monsieur often distinguished the word *banos*, which Maria Theresa accentuated with spiteful anger.

"The baths," said Monsieur to himself, "it seems it is the baths that have put her out." And he endeavored to put together the disconnected phrases which he had been able to understand. It was easy to guess that the queen was complaining bitterly, and that, if Anne of Austria did not console her, she at least endeavored to do so. Monsieur was afraid to be detected listening at the door, and he therefore made up his mind to cough; the two queens turned round at the sound and Monsieur entered. At sight of the prince, the young queen rose precipitately, and dried her tears. Monsieur, however, knew the people he had to deal with too well, and was naturally too polite to remain silent, and he accordingly saluted them. The queen-mother smiled pleasantly at him, saying, "What do you want, Philip?"

"I?—nothing," stammered Monsieur. "I was looking for——"

"Whom?"

"I was looking for Madame."

"Madame is at the baths."

"And the king?" said Monsieur, in a tone which made the queen tremble.

"The king also, and the whole court as well," replied Anne of Austria."

"Except you, madame," said Monsieur.

Oh! I," said the young queen, "I seem to terrify all those who amuse themselves."

"And so do I,—judging from appearances," rejoined Monsieur.

Anne of Austria made a sign to her daughter-in-law, who withdrew, weeping.

Monsieur's brows contracted, as he remarked aloud, "What a cheerless house. What do you think of it, mother?"

"Why no; everybody here is pleasure-hunting."

"Yes, indeed, that is the very thing that makes those dull who do not care for pleasure."

"In what a tone you say that, Philip."

"Upon my word, madame, I speak as I think."

"Explain yourself; what is the matter?"

"Ask my sister-in-law, rather, who, just now, was detailing all her grievances to you."

"Her grievances, what——"

"Yes, I was listening; accidentally I confess, but still I listened—so that I heard only too well my sister complain of those famous baths of Madame——"

"Ah! folly!"

"No, no, no; people are not always foolish when they weep. The queen said *banos*, which means baths."

"I repeat, Philip," said Anne of Austria, "that your sister is childishly jealous."

"In that case, madame," replied the prince, "I, too, must with great humility, accuse myself of possessing the same defect."

"You also, Philip?"

"Certainly."

"Are you really jealous of these baths?"

"And why not, madame, when the king goes to the baths with my wife, and does not take the queen? Why not, when Madame goes to the baths with the king, and does not do me the honor to even invite me? And you enjoin my sister-in-law to be satisfied, and require me to be satisfied, too."

"You are raving, my dear Philip," said Anne of Austria; "you have driven the Duke of Buckingham away; you have been the cause of M. de Guiche's exile; do you now wish to send the king away from Fontainebleau?"

"I do not pretend to anything of the kind, madame," said Monsieur, bitterly; "but at least, *I* can withdraw, and I shall do so."

"Jealous of the king,—jealous of your brother?"

"Yes, madame, I am jealous of the king—of my own brother, and remarkably jealous too."

"Really, Monsieur," exclaimed Anne of Austria, affecting to be indignant, "I begin to believe you are mad, and a sworn enemy to my repose. I therefore abandon the place to you, for I have no means of defending myself against such monomanias."

She rose and left Monsieur a prey to the most extravagant transport of passion. He remained for a moment completely bewildered; then, recovering himself, again went to the stables, found the groom, once more asked him for a carriage or a horse, and upon his replying that there was neither the one nor the other, Monsieur snatched a long whip from the hand of a stable-boy, and began to pursue the poor devil of a groom all round the servants' courtyard, whipping him the while, in spite of his cries and excuses; then, quite out of breath, covered with perspiration, and trembling in every limb, he returned to his own apartments, broke in pieces some beautiful specimens of porcelain, and then got into bed, booted and spurred as he was, crying out for some one to come to him.

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